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**EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERACY PRACTICES IN A MULTILINGUAL
TOWNSHIP IN GAUTENG PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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THESIS

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full requirements for the degree**

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SUPERVISOR: Prof L Kajee

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work. It is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Education and Curriculum Studies, University of Johannesburg. This thesis has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university. Where use has been made of the results of other authors, they have been duly acknowledged in the text.



Rockie Sibanda

22 October 2018

ABSTRACT

This study draws on sociolinguistic theories with the aim to investigate the nature of young children's early encounters with literacy in their homes and the implications of these encounters for their later development as readers and writers in schools. This is depicted by five Grade 3 learners in a multilingual township¹ in the west of Johannesburg, South Africa. In order to realise this aim, the study has four objectives. The first is to map out the literacy practices in which young children engage at home, in their township and at school. The second is to examine the implications of children's encounters with literacy for their careers as readers and writers, in-school and out-of-school. The third is to examine how the children's literacy practices manifest in their educators' teaching practice. The last objective is to examine how children's out-of-school literacy practices can contribute to developing schooled literacy.

The investigation employs a case study design framed by New Literacy Studies (Gee, 1996; Street, 1993), characterised by an understanding of literacies as multiple and situated within social and cultural practices and discourses (Hull & Schultz, 2002). The study, conducted over two years, focuses on children's in-school and out-of-school literacy practices using, as participants, five learners in the Foundation Phase, together with their parents, educators and Gauteng Department of Education officials. Data for this study were collected through interviews and personal observations of classroom practices and out-of-school literacy practices of the children.

Findings suggest that the research approach employed in this study has the potential to examine classroom instruction that allows learners to successfully acquire literacy that meets the international, national and local testing standards. Findings also suggest gaps in harmonising in-school literacy competence, which is mainly skills-based pedagogy; and the children's out-of-

¹ The often underdeveloped segregated urban areas that were reserved for non-whites, namely Indians, Africans and Coloureds during Apartheid era. Townships were usually built on the periphery of towns and cities (Huchzermeyer, 2011).

school experiences. This study reveals that children in the Foundation Phase experience literacy in different ways through mediation by family members and during play. However, there seems to be a chasm of understanding between educators and parents in terms of how best to collaboratively support children's learning. This leads to poor learner performance which has necessitated the Gauteng Department of Education to implement intervention strategies aimed at improving learner performance. Key findings from this study reveal that such intervention strategies are inadequate in addressing the poor literacy levels in primary education. An important determining factor is the language of instruction in the Foundation Phase and the language that the children are exposed to, at home. Children from multilingual settings are exposed to many different languages in their environment and most of them fail to competently master what is supposed to be their home language. In most instances, children are taught in a language they are either least fluent in or understand. What is also evident in this study is that most educators in township schools are product of the inferior Bantu education and they have a weak mastery of English as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). It is found that all the transcripts of interviews conducted in English with educators in this study indicate numerous grammatical and expression errors. This language deficiency suggests that the crisis in South African education lies in both the learning and teaching. It can be concluded that literacy competence measured by standardised tests does not address the literacy practices children engage in, in their homes. Educators should acknowledge that literacy experiences that the children experience at home should be linked to what they experience in the classroom. Mediation of learning is not only confined to classroom experiences but happens even outside the classroom. The analysis of the data has shown that literacy happens in the homes even before children experience formal education, consistent with the emergent literacies.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms with explanations

ANA	Annual National Assessment
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
DSTV	Digital Satellite Television
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
FFL	Foundations for Learning
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
GPLMS	Gauteng Province Literacy and Mathematics Support
LiEP	Language-in-Education Policy
LoLT	Languages of Learning and Teaching
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MLA	Monitoring Learning Achievement
MTE	Mother-tongue medium Education
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIP	National Integrated Plan
NRS	National Reading Strategy
NSNP	National Schools Nutrition Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies
PPS	Poorly Performing School
RDP	Rural Development Programme
READ	Read, Educate, Adjust and Develop
SABC	South Africa Broadcasting Corporation
SACMED	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Quality
SANLI	South African National Literacy Initiative
TIMSS	Third International Mathematics and Science Study
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund

CHAPTER 1

THE AIM AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

After 1994, the democratic South African government was not only concerned with the desegregation of the education system but also with addressing the poor literacy levels, specifically, in primary schools (Bloch, 2009). The South African government then formulated and implemented several policies meant to bring about radical changes in the education system in line with the Bill of Rights (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 1996) (DoJCD). Even after more than 20 years into democracy, disparities in terms of physical resources between the well-resourced former model 'C'² schools and poor rural and township schools can still be seen. Although the government implemented changes meant to distribute resources equally, restructuring the national school curriculum several times, these disparities in resources still exist. Informed by this background, this study seeks to illuminate how the impact of these challenges manifests in the poor performance of learners in primary schools, and as such result in low literacy rates, evident most in the poor rural and township schools.

In trying to address these poor literacy concerns, the South African government has tried to prioritise early childhood development (ECD). Early Childhood Development (ECD) is defined as "the processes by which children from birth to nine years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially" (Department of Education³, 2001a: 33) (DoE). To ensure equitable provision of ECD services, the government has adopted an inter-departmental approach to addressing ECD, involving the Department of Social Development, the Department of Health and the National Department of Education. Firstly, the Department of Social Development (DoSD) takes responsibility for children from birth to 5 years old and provides child social grants to children of unemployed or destitute

² Well-equipped former government schools meant for white children during the Apartheid era.

³ The department responsible for primary and secondary education was later changed to Department of Basic Education so these terms are used interchangeably in this thesis.

parents. The main responsibility of the Department of Social Development is to provide social services that include registration of child recipients of social grants, and the development and implementation of psychosocial services for children at primary school level. The Department of Social Development is also responsible for monitoring and registration of ECD centres, aftercare and family care (Department of Social Development, 2014). Regarding the monitoring of ECD centres, the Department of Social Development provides guidelines for minimum standards for ECD facilities; management of the ECD centres; learning programmes and information related to health and safety in the ECD centres; and child development and training of educators (Sherry & Draper, 2013). As an incentive to providing early childhood education, the government provides a financial subsidy on a per-child, per-day basis for centres registered with the Department of Social Development. Secondly, the Department of Health caters for children's health from birth to 9 years old (Department of Education, 2001a). This department provides prenatal services; services to infants and children up to the age of 9 years; and integrated management of childhood diseases, primary health care; and HIV and AIDS interventions (DoE, 2001a).

Finally, the major responsibility for ECD resides with the Department of Basic Education (DBE), which focuses on children from birth to 9 years old. The main responsibilities of the DBE are curriculum development, for the development of the capacity of educators and caregivers, and community development workers so that they are able to deliver the integrated ECD programmes for children (Department of Basic Education, 2012) (DBE). Furthermore, the Department is responsible for educator training and providing learning and teaching resources for 5-year-old children as they enter Grade R⁴ (DBE, 2012). This responsibility is in line with a growing body of international evidence that appropriate investment in early childhood development can positively impact on national health, education and socio-economic outcomes, thus significantly benefiting society as a whole (Department of Education, 2001a). There is also evidence that a strong

⁴ Grade R is a single-year pre-school programme intended to prepare children for Grade 1. It is implemented at primary schools or at community-based early childhood development (ECD) sites.

foundation in early childhood lays the groundwork for responsible citizenship, economic prosperity, healthy communities, and successful parenting of the next generation. It is argued that a weak foundation can seriously undermine the social and economic vitality of the nation (DoE, 2001a).

Therefore, with the aim of providing children with a strong foundation prior to entry into school (Meier, 2014; Spaull, 2013), the South African government has invested extensively in early childhood education (ECE) in both human and physical capital, spending approximately 15% of its 2015/2016 national budget on education (Pretorius & Spaull, 2016). Recently, in his 2018 budget speech, the former Minister of Finance, Malusi Gigaba announced that the Department of Basic Education has been allocated R246.8 billion of the total budget of R1,67 trillion. He emphasised that "Basic education remains a key focus in the 2018 budget" (Rupiah, 2018). Despite the increased government funding for ECD in recent years and a huge investment in education, it is well-documented that South Africa still produces learners with very low literacy and numeracy levels (Fleisch, 2008; Howie, Van Staden, Tshele, Dowse & Zimmerman, 2012; Spaull, 2013). Reports on educational achievement in South Africa demonstrate that far too many children in primary schools are performing very poorly, often failing to acquire functional numeracy and literacy skills as they are classified as not only among the worst in the world, but often among the worst in the Southern African region and in Africa as a whole (Lancaster & Kirklady, 2010). The Department of Education (2001a) argues that the learning deficits that children accumulate in their early years are not 'remediated' by schooling but they continue to grow over time, until they become insurmountable. Over the past decade there has been a growing concern that a substantial number of South African school children are one or more years below the acceptable achievement levels compared to other countries in Africa, particularly in key subjects such as English First Additional Language and Mathematics (Taylor, 2014; Spaull & Kotze, 2015). Spaull and Kotze (2015) argue that school children who are academically behind the acceptable levels of performance in the Foundation Phase, are likely to fall further and further behind their counterparts as they progress up through the school system. In trying

to remediate this situation, the government has decided to expose children to quality ECD programmes at an early age so that they may be more ready to learn when they begin school. This initiative is supposed to reduce the recurring likelihood of children repeating grades or dropping out of school (DoE, 2001b). Several government initiatives point to high-level awareness of the importance of ECD for human and social development and national productivity (DoE, 2001b). These initiatives include significantly increased funding for ECD by the National Treasury; the production of a national Diagnostic Review of ECD in 2012; recognition of the importance of the early years in the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision for 2030; and the commissioning in 2013 of proposals for a new national ECD policy and programme. The government's intervention is providing ECD services for young children, with priority given to about 2.5 million poor and vulnerable children below the age of 6 (DoE, 2001b). The emphasis on service provision for ECD in South Africa has resulted in numerous policies, priority statements, and programmes located within several government departments.

Laying the foundation for Early Childhood Development was the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995), where government aimed at advancing an integrated system for ECD. To achieve this, the paper called for inter-sectorial collaboration with representative bodies of ECD educators, trainers, resource specialists, NGOs, development agencies and the private sector (DoE, 1995). This paper laid a foundation to the Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development (DoE, 1996), the White Paper for Social Welfare (DoW, 1997) and the White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (DoE, 2001a). The White Paper 5 (DoE, 2001a) acknowledges that a child's development and growth is affected by a combination of inter-related factors which constitute the child's overall environment (Department of Education, 2001a: 8). The paper advises that,

In constructing this environment the basic needs of a child must be met by ensuring adequate nutrition, good health, early childhood stimulation and a loving and secure environment. It is clear that early childhood development must be approached within a wider and holistic context which will include multiple learning environments, namely the school, family and the community that influence the development of a child (DoE, 2001a: 9).

The White Paper 5 called for universal access to Grade R services for five-year-old children and an inter-sectorial strategic plan that would target services and programmes for children below the age of 5 years. In summary, these policies created a “complex ECD policy environment in the country – different government departments with interlocking mandates (policies and legislation) focused on similar and different sector-specific and age-specific service delivery to meet children’s needs” (Department of Basic Education, 2012: 10). The policies reflect government’s intention to increase access to ECD as well as to enhance the quality of services, specifically for those children from disadvantaged backgrounds (DBE, 2012).

In 2005, the government published the National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development in South Africa 2005-2010 (NIPECDSA 2005-2010) (Department of Education, 2005). The aim of this National Integrated Plan for ECD 2005-2010, was to address the needs of children from birth to 4 years of age and to co-ordinate the efforts of the different government sectors: Department of Basic Education, Department of Social Development & Department of Health (DBE, 2005). The NIP was an inter-sectorial framework and plan on how ECD needs would be operationalised in the sector. The vision of the NIPECDSA 2005-2010, was to:

create an environment and opportunities where children have access to a range of safe, accessible and high quality ECD programmes that include a developmentally appropriate curriculum, knowledgeable and well-trained staff and educators and comprehensive services that support their health, nutrition and social well-being in an environment that respects and supports diversity [...]These services would be further supported through training of teachers, parents and caregivers, infrastructure development, research and monitoring and evaluation (Department of Basic Education, 2012: 4).

The NIP outlines the government’s commitment toward giving children in the country the best start in life, thereby building a solid foundation of physical, emotional, psychosocial, cognitive, and healthy development. The NIP also reasserts the leading role of the government in formulating, implementing and monitoring policies and programmes on ECD, whilst recognising the important

role played by non-governmental and community-based organisations (Department of Education, 2001b).

Viewed against the need to prioritise early childhood education (ECE), the South African government has worked to incorporate ECD programmes and services into the nation's education system as outlined in the NIPECDSA 2005-2010 (DBE, 2005). In 2000, financing ECD became a budget item with the National Treasury. Later, in 2004, the Office of the President declared ECD a national priority, putting in place directives that all municipalities must include ECD planning in their Integrated Development Plans. Since then, and especially after the publication of the National Integrated Plan for ECD in South Africa (DBE, 2005) and the passing of the Children's Amendment Act (2007), ECD has become a national priority. The government's main focus has been the introduction of Grade R in public schools (as opposed to community-based Grade R). Introducing Grade R in public schools is mainly meant to formalise this phase and monitor its implementation. In the 2015 Department of Education audit report, it was reported that about 70% of South African young children still do not attend preschool or other ECD facilities before going to school (Hall, Sambu, Berry, Giese & Almeleh, 2017). I construe this to be a challenge to the government's aim of ensuring that children start Grade 1 when they are 'school ready'. This challenge is further discussed in detail in the subsequent chapters on data analysis.

In December 2015, cabinet ratified the NIPECD 2005-2010, in keeping with the National Development Plan 2030. The new policy specifically provides for young children from conception until the year before they enter formal schooling (0 - 6), or for children with disabilities or development delays when compulsory school or special education begins (by age 7). It aims to transform the delivery of ECD services by addressing critical gaps and ensuring that provision is universally available, comprehensive and equitable (in sufficient quantities and proximity) (National Gazette No. 38558, 13 March 2015, Vol 597, Page 44). It was noted that less than 50% of young children between 0 – 4 years old access early learning services. About 34,4% of these children were in ECD centres, 11,9% with a day

mother, 45,4% at home with a parent or guardian, 7% at home with another adult, 0,1% are home with somebody younger than 18 years old, 1% are in the home of someone else and 0,2% are with someone other than these aforementioned groups. These statistics are disturbing as they indicate that in 2015, only 685 511 children received the per-child per-day subsidy at an ECD centre. Estimates are that only 20% of children from the poorest 40% of households access some form of out of home ECD. Data from 2006 indicated that only 24% of children between birth and 6 years old participated in an ECD centre.

As will be illustrated in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, there is much evidence of the benefits of early intervention in literacy teaching, and that the failure to provide it in South Africa today constitutes a crisis with long-term implications. In its 2001 report, the Department of Education argued that unless the government provides ECD services to all children, especially those who need it most, the country misses the opportunity to enhance school learning, retention, success and it also fails to contribute to advancing and equalising South African society (DoE, 2001a). The DoE sees provision of ECD services as urgent as “the brains of children do not develop backwards”, and educational opportunities these young children may miss are difficult if not impossible to remedy in the long-run (DoE, 2001a). Thus, the Department of Education sees the holistic and complex nature of child development as requiring the involvement of multiple partners across ministries, communities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and other stakeholders, including parents and caregivers (DoE, 2001a).

Because of the gaps in ECD highlighted in the discussion thus far, my study sets out to illuminate the state of ECE in South Africa by discussing the literacy practices among primary school learners in a township where the study is situated. This chapter, provides the background for the study, followed by motivation for the study. Thereafter, I outline the problems and early childhood literacy issues investigated and the key questions raised. Finally, the structure of the thesis and questions are presented towards the end of this chapter.

1.2 Background to the study

My study investigates the early childhood literacy practices in a multilingual township in a South African. My interest in this research area stems from many reports in the media and research that have all shown that South African primary schools are producing learners who cannot 'read' or 'count'. According to Fleisch (2008), the poor performance at any level of schooling begins in the foundation phase⁵, in the very earliest days of formal schooling and continues unbroken to the end of primary education and beyond. Similarly, Jansen (2012) argues that the root of the South African educational crisis lies not in matriculation or Matric⁶ but in the foundation years where the system fails to provide children with the basics of scientific literacy on which they can build in later years. Other sentiments are documented in Graeme Bloch's (2009) controversial book, *The Toxic Mix*, in which he reveals that South African children are very far from achieving their full potential. Bloch (2009) describes South African children as routinely underachieving, and being not only among the worst in the world, but often among the worst in the southern African region and in Africa as a whole.

The South African education system is, therefore, faced with numerous challenges. The extent of these challenges is documented in Fleisch's (2008: 8) description of primary schooling in South Africa as being "in crisis", referring to the widespread failure of learners in systematic evaluations conducted by the national Department of Education, provincial Departments of Education as well as some international bodies (DoE, 2008). This is evident in the results of local tests conducted by the Department of Education at primary school level over the last 15 years, which show that the overwhelming majority of South African primary school learners are not learning to read, write and do arithmetic at the levels laid out by the curricula. In addition to that, while over half of the learners who start school never reach the end of their school careers, approximately 45% of them

⁵ Primary school Grades 1-3, including Grade R which is school pre-entry grade.

⁶ In South Africa, matriculation (or matric) is a term commonly used to refer to the final year of high school and the qualification received on graduating from high school, although strictly speaking, it refers to the minimum university entrance requirements.

leave universities without graduating (Lancaster & Kirkclady, 2010). Bloch (2009) points out that these statistics are averages that hide the huge differences within the 'segregated' South African education system of the 'haves' and 'have nots'. There are sharp divisions between the formerly white suburban schools and the majority of township and rural schools, which result in the education system continuing to reflect and reproduce the inequalities of the South African society. Learners in poor schools struggle to acquire reading skills needed for their academic and occupational progress (Sailors, Hoffman & Mathee, 2007). Fleisch (2008) also argues that children from rural and township primary schools complete their schooling without being able to read fluently in their school's instructional language in contrast to the children from predominantly black and white middle class families who attend relatively well-resourced former model 'C' and private schools. Fleisch (2008) further asserts that reading achievement is conditioned by the degree of alignment in children's language repertoire and the language of schooling, which is further influenced by the family literacy practices.

The poor literacy competence in primary schools extends to high school performance, as empirical studies on literacy competence carried out in South Africa have revealed. Many Grade 12 learners who cannot read or write at the level expected of them are found to possess the literacy levels of Grade 4 learners (Horne, 2005). The deficiency in literacy skills is compounded by the fact that reading is only taught in the foundation phase (Grades 1-3) of schooling with an emphasis on decoding skills. According to Baatjies (2003), it is incorrect to assume that learners acquire basic literacy by the end of Grades 3 and 4 and if they experience problems in later grades, then it is regarded as a language problem and not a reading problem. Although this observation is not regarded official policy it has become accepted practice when explaining the poor literacy levels in higher grades. Poor literacy levels in secondary schools subsequently spill over to tertiary institutions where students exhibit academic competency below the expected levels. When students enter higher education, they struggle to cope academically (Baatjies, 2003). The appalling conditions and poor literacy levels in township and rural schools are usually attributed to the past repressive apartheid policies.

However, Martier-Moore and Hart (2007) refute this assertion as they argue that while the legacy of apartheid can be blamed for the literacy crisis in South African schools, the poor literacy levels should be attributed to many failed post-1994 radical curriculum changes and policies which were meant to bring educational reforms but seemed to have failed to address the literacy problems. The media has continually been critical of the “low literacy levels in the Foundation Phase since the launch of Curriculum” 2005 (Lawrence, 2011: 13). The curriculum reforms are discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this research study.

My interest in literacy issues partially came about as a result of years of teaching English and Mathematics at South African township high schools, particularly those classified as poorly performing, one of which this study is based. As a multilingual township-born Black South African, my research interest focuses on multilingual education and literacy awareness. Both my Honours and Masters’ research studies focused on language acquisition and teaching literacy awareness at poorly performing schools.

More disturbing to me was the realisation that most of the learner’s literacy levels at the school were below the expected high school level. Educators at the school blamed the poor literacy levels on local primary schools. As an educator I noticed poor levels of basic literacy in learners. Not only do learners lack basic literacy skills, but their comprehension of subject matter was severely compromised by poor reading literacy levels.

1.3 Discussion of the problem

In my discussion of the problem I focus on 1) literacy in the contemporary world, 2) the low literacy measures and, 3) the poor literacy levels in South Africa. Firstly, literacy competence is essential for the social and economic welfare of individuals and the entire society. This is consistent with Bernstein’s (2000: xix) view that literacy is “central to the knowledge base of society, groups and individuals”. In developed countries, the literacy levels are used as a measure of the success of an education system. Learner performance in numeracy and literacy, specifically reading literacy, is typically used as a measure of how well an education system is

performing (Pretorius & Spaull, 2016a). International research indicates a growing concern in many countries around the world that students lack the necessary reading abilities to succeed at school and tertiary institutions. Even in developed countries the low literacy levels are also problematic. However, in developing countries in Africa in particular, there is still a gap in early childhood research (Paran & Williams, 2007; Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007). While the early years do not define a child's future, current research indicates that it is during the first years of life that children develop the foundations of literacy and language skills, making those years crucial to early childhood development. Therefore, investment in early literacy and child development helps create strong foundations for future generations (Balla-Boudreau, O'Reilly, Howard & McDougall, 2011). It is because of the importance of literacy competence that low literacy levels have been of great concern in both developed and developing countries (Coltheart & Prior, 2007; Commeyras & Inyenga, 2007). The problem of low literacy levels is a worldwide problem not confined to poor or developing countries. For example, a 2008 study of Grade 3 and Grade 6 learners in Ontario, Canada, found that approximately 30% of learners lacked the literacy skills associated with their age (Education Quality and Accountability Office, 2011). In the United States of America, it was reported that 40% of children experience significant problems in becoming competent readers, and 40% of fourth graders and eighth graders fail to read at the level considered basic to grade-level school work (Hugo, le Roux, Muller & Nel, 2005: 210). In an international comparative study of reading comprehension, Dutch students achieved a higher average performance level than their European counterparts, with only 7% unable to read well enough to function independently in wider society compared to the European average of just over 17% (Houtveen & Van de Grift, 2007: 405). I therefore conclude that literacy problem is not confined to South Africa but prevalent in European countries as well.

The most recent insight on the state of South Africa's education system is provided in Hoadley's (2016) document that details the findings of a review of research on teaching and learning at the Foundation Phase level in South African schools,

focusing on Grades 1, 2 and 3. The review pays particular attention to the teaching and learning of language and mathematics; as a background document to the 'Building evidence for policy making: Using available datasets to identify underlying causes of poor learner performance in Foundation Phase literacy and numeracy' Project (Hoadley, 2016). The concluding summary of the review raises some of the cautionary points around methodology and validity that emerge in the course of the discussion of the research literature (Hoadley, 2016). Nag, Chiat, Torgerson and Snowling (2014, cited in Hoadley, 2016) provide an excellent review of research focused on the teaching of literacy and numeracy in the early grades in developing countries, covering a wide range of developing countries in Africa, South and Central America, Central Europe and Asia. The central findings of the review are relevant to the South African context. Much of what is presented in the review is recognisable in our own South African context, and confirmed by smaller, less robust studies here. In terms of actual classroom practices, the review found from ethnographic studies, a consistent picture across settings of dominant pedagogic practices across developing country contexts (Nag et al., 2014). Dominant pedagogic practices such as rote and surface learning, chorus, copywriting and drill were the most visible aspects of classroom instruction. The authors of the review point out a variety of teaching methods in these practices, suggesting a more responsive approach to teaching in some cases. The authors' argument is that a significant constraint on literacy and numeracy instruction in schools is the neglect to take into account individual differences in the skills children bring to school. They argue that classroom methods generally neglect to make explicit what is required for competency in particular learning areas (Nag et al., 2014):14). Nag et al. (2014: 29) point out that lessons across developing countries' classrooms are not interactive, or 'dialogic', rather "many teachers are entrenched in prescriptive/directive ways of instruction that are neither engaging nor effective".

Secondly, related to the pedagogic shortcoming in South Africa is the worrying low literacy levels shown by systematic evaluations. Besides undertaking its own evaluations to measure the performance of its primary school learners, South

Africa also participates in international assessments such as Trends in Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS), Progress in Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS)⁷ and the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) (DBE, 2016). Of particular importance to this study is the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) evaluations which assess reading comprehension at Grade 4/5 level (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy, 2007). South Africa has participated in the four waves of PIRLS, in 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016. In the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), conducted in 2006, more than 30 000 Grade 4 and 5 students, were drawn from 45 countries worldwide. In South Africa, learners were assessed using instruments translated into South African's 11 official languages to cater for different South African language populations. Unlike the majority of countries that participated in 2006, where only Grade 4s were tested, in South Africa, Grade 5 learners were also tested so that Grades 4 and 5 performance could be compared; and out of a concern that Grade 4 is a transition phase from foundation (Grade R - 3) to intermediate phase (Grade 4 - 7) (Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Sherman & Acher, 2007). The Grade 4 learners, aged 9.5 years and older, were chosen, expressly as the fourth year of formal schooling is considered "an important transition point in children's development as readers. Typically, at this point, students are assumed to have learned how to read and are now reading to learn" (Joncas, 2007: 3; Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Sainsbury, 2007).

The PIRLS 2006 results show that of the 45 countries that participated in the systematic evaluation, including other middle-income countries such as Morocco, Iran, Trinidad and Tobago, Indonesia, and Macedonia, South African Grade 4s and 5s achieved the lowest score, well below the international average (Howie et. al. 2007). In stark contrast to the majority of other participating countries, only 13% of the Grade 4s and 22% of the Grade 5s reached the Low International Benchmark, (Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Sherman & Acher,

⁷ PIRLS is an international assessment of reading literacy which is conducted every 5 years by the International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) since 2001. In South Africa it is implemented by the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) at Pretoria University.

2007: 218). Trong (2010: 2) elucidates the practical value of this benchmark: “learners who were not able to demonstrate even the basic reading skills of the Low International Benchmark by the fourth grade were considered to be at serious risk of not learning how to read”. Using this framework, it means that 87% of Grade 4 and 78% of Grade 5 pupils in South Africa were deemed to be at serious risk of not learning to read as they did not reach any of the benchmarks. An analysis of the PIRLS 2006 results also shows that more than half of the English and Afrikaans-speaking learners, and over 80% of African language speakers, did not reach the Low International Benchmark, which means that they lacked basic reading skills and strategies to cope with academic tasks. The PIRLS 2006 results imply that primary schools in South Africa face great challenges in assisting learners towards attaining optimum development of their reading abilities. These findings highlight concerns about reading and literacy teaching quality in South African primary schools as its score was the lowest (Hugo, 2010: 133).

What is interesting about PIRLS 2006 is that among the participating countries South Africa had one of the most rural-based populations of the group (Mullis et. al. 2007). Another characteristic that made South Africa exceptional is that it had the highest learner: teacher ratio. Economically however, South Africa was only the 10th poorest country and was average in terms of the percentage of GDP and public expenditure on education. Insight gained from the results of the 2006 PIRLS (Howie et. al. 2007) is that many homes are literature poor and many learners’ initial literacy is gained in their second or even third language. Therefore, research suggests that South African learners acquire learning deficits early on in the foundation phase of their academic careers (Report Commissioned by Centre for Development & Enterprise (CDE) October 2013). Implications of this research are that for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, the gap between what they should know and what they do know grows over time. This means that as time goes on these children fall further and further behind the curriculum, and this leads to a situation where remediation is almost impossible in high school since this learning gap would have been left unaddressed for far too long. For example, an analysis of learners in the Eastern Cape showed that while they are already 1,8

years behind the benchmark by Grade 3, this grows to 2,8 years behind the benchmark by Grade 9, thus making effective remediation at this higher grade improbable. Given that these learning deficits are acquired early on in children's schooling careers (i.e. in primary school), it is imperative to also identify and remediate these learning gaps early on, before they become insurmountable learning deficits and lead to almost certain failure and drop-out (Report Commissioned by Centre for Development & Enterprise (CDE) October 2013).

Therefore, in response to the incredibly weak performance of South African learners in PIRLS 2006, South Africa opted to take part in prePIRLS in 2011. In contrast, prePIRLS is "a less difficult assessment, intended to measure the reading comprehension skills of pupils who are still in the process of learning how to read" (Howie, Van Staden, Tshele, Dowse & Zimmerman, 2012). In the PIRLS 2011, Botswana, Colombia, and South Africa were the inaugural prePIRLS participants. In the prePIRLS reading achievement for the fourth grade, South Africa scored an average of 461 compared to Botswana's of 463. Overall, the findings from the PIRLS showed that South Africa consistently obtained the lowest mean amongst the 600 countries that participated in the study in the PIRLS 2011 (Howie et. al., 2012). More recently, on 5 December 2017, Angie Motshekga, the Minister of Basic Education announced the 'shocking' findings of the "Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2016 report, which the Department commissioned to reaffirm findings of the Annual National Assessments, and the National Education Evaluation and Development (NEEDU) Report among others that found that our learners still have challenges with their cognitive levels of literacy" (Department of Basic Education, 2017). The summary of the findings shows that 78% (about 8 out of 10) of South African Grade 4 students cannot read for meaning (Spaull, 2017). That is to say that they could not reach the Low International PIRLS Benchmark in reading (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena & McLeod Palane, 2017). They could not locate and retrieve explicitly stated information or make straightforward inferences about events and reasons for actions (Howie, et. al., 2017; Mullis, Martin, Foy & Hooper, 2017: 55). The report also reveals that in reading, South African Grade 4 children have scored the

lowest mark in the latest 2016 round of the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study as it scored last of 50 countries that participated in the evaluation. The study included mostly High Income Countries but there were a number of middle-income countries such as Iran, Chile, Morocco, and Oman. While 78% of South African Grade 4 children cannot read, in America this is 4% and in England just 3% cannot read. The study also included middle-income countries and showed that in Iran 35% of Grade 4 students could not read for meaning while in Chile 13% could not do so (PIRLS 2016: 55). It has to be noted that the reading crisis is more serious than previously thought. When South Africa participated in prePIRLS 2011 (an easier version of PIRLS) it was found that 58% of South African Grade 4 children could not read for meaning. However this was on a separate test and not on the PIRLS scale score (i.e. not the same metric). For the first time in 2016 the prePIRLS (now called PIRLS Literacy) was put on the same scale score as PIRLS. The PIRLS 2016 results show consistently high provincial percentages of Grade 4s who did not reach the Lowest Benchmark pointing to lack of basic literacy skills as illustrated in Figure 1.1.

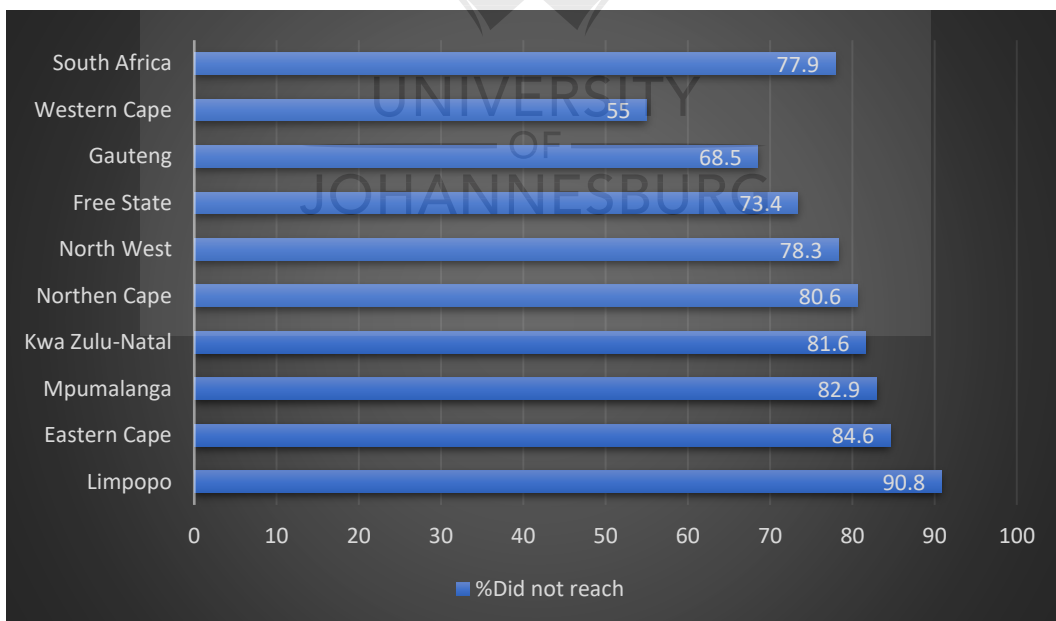


Figure 1.1: Grade 4 Benchmark attainment by province (Source: PIRLS 2016: 5)

As illustrated in Figure 1.1, a large number of Grade 4 learners did not reach the Low Benchmark in ability to read for meaning. Limpopo and Western Cape were

the two provinces that were reported as having the lowest benchmark (PIRLS 2016: 5). Just like PIRLS 2011, the PIRLS 2016 results show that provinces with a large number of Grade 4 learners living in remote rural areas or townships have the lowest reading literacy scores compared to other locations (PIRLS, 2016: 5). Such provinces had large class sizes compared to the average class size of 45 learners per class recorded in the study. For example, Limpopo had an average class size of 55 learners, compared to 24 learners per class internationally (PIRLS, 2016: 6). Based on available research it seems that government is not working towards decreasing class sizes, instead more focus has been placed on curriculum reform instead of addressing conditions in schools and sociocultural factors responsible for the low literacy levels. Low Benchmark achievements seem to relatively correspond to test language achievement as illustrated in the following Figure 1.2.

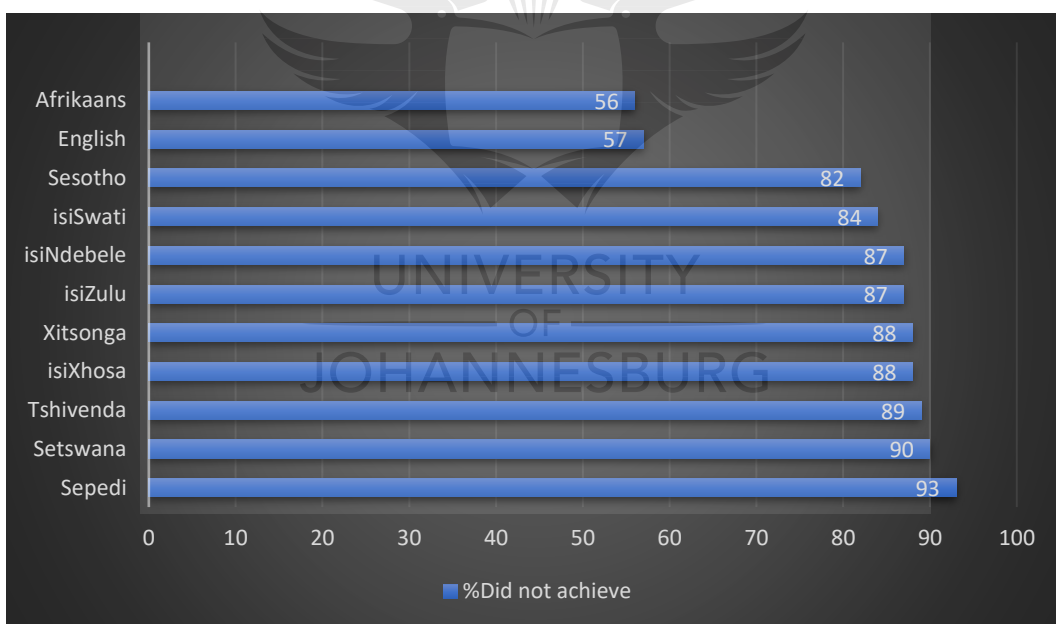


Figure 1.2: Grade 4 PIRLS 2016 Literacy achievement by test language (Source: PIRLS 2016: 5)

As illustrated in Figure 1.2, PIRLS 2016 results show that large numbers of Grade 4 learners tested in indigenous African languages could not read for meaning. The highest performance is by learners writing the test in English and Afrikaans whereas about 90% and more of learners writing in Setswana and Sepedi, two of

the indigenous languages, did not reach the lowest benchmark (PIRLS 2016: 5). The Setswana results are of particular interest to my study as it is also a language of learning and teaching in foundation phase in the school where the study was conducted. Generally, the performance of learners who wrote the test in English or Afrikaans was significantly higher than that of those who wrote the test in one of the nine African languages; namely: Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho (Sepedi), Swati, Tswana, Xhosa, Tsonga, Venda and Zulu. There seems to be a correlation between achievement by test language and ability to read for meaning. For example, Limpopo Province with the highest number of learners unable to read for meaning also happens to be home to Sepedi, Tshivenda and Xitsonga speaking learners who also exhibited large percentage amounts of inability to read in test language. Similarly, North West also exhibited high numbers of learners who were unable to read for meaning. This was the case in spite of the fact that North West Province is home to Setswana-speaking learners. Low literacy levels in South African primary schools are also evident in the results of other systematic evaluations such as the Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) which assessed numeracy and literacy at Grade 6 in 2000, 2007, 2011 and 2013, and the National School Effectiveness Study (NSES), which evaluated Grades 3–5 from 2007 to 2009 (Pretorius & Spaull, 2016a). The SACMEQ II, III and IV evaluations, undertaken in 2007, 2011 and 2013 respectively, indicated South Africa's performance in literacy to be poor relative to other southern African countries. The magnitude of the poor literacy levels in South Africa, recorded in the SACMEQ project, considered educational quality and performance in 15 member countries in which South Africa did not reach the SACMEQ mean of 500 in reading. The SAQMEQ II findings show that "more than half the children in South Africa's primary schools are not even reading at a minimal level to allow them to survive" (Moloi & Strauss, 2005: 17). This poor performance is consistent with documented evidence that South Africa is performing more poorly than other African countries. Similarly, in another evaluation, the 2003 Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) analysis has shown that South African primary school learners fared worst of the 46 countries that were surveyed (Bloch, 2009: 61-62). Of the 39 countries

participating in TIMSS 2015, South Africa was one of the lower performers (TIMSS, 2015). In another international study, the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA, 1999) cross-national study project designed by UNESCO and UNICEF as part of the 'Education for All' campaign took samples of Grade 4 learners in a number of countries, including South Africa. The results revealed that in the literacy component South African children attained 48.1% compared to Tunisia with 78% and Mauritius with 61% (Bloch, 2009: 63). This poor performance of learners in primary schools has been a major concern to the South African government. The extent of the poor literacy levels is documented in Graeme Bloch's book, *The Toxic Mix* in, which he reveals that comparative scores for mathematics, numeracy and literacy in South Africa are consistently among the worst in the world (Bloch, 2009: 61).

What is worrying is that the poor literacy levels still exist despite substantial evidence of patterns of poor literacy achievement gathered by the Department of Education over the years through official tests administered in primary schools. In 2001 and 2004, the Department of Education conducted its own national systemic evaluations on Grade 3s (Foundation Phase) to establish literacy and numeracy levels in primary schools (DoE, 2008b). In the first of these systematic evaluations conducted in 2001, it was found that learners scored an average of 30% on the mathematics task, 54% on reading and writing; and reading comprehension was only 39%. A substantial number of learners scored 20% in numeracy and literacy (Bloch, 2009: 62). Generally, both the 2001 and 2004 systematic evaluations showed that children were reading and writing at well below the expected grade level across the country (DoE, 2008b: 4). However, results of a follow-up evaluation of Grade 3 learners conducted by the Department of Education in 2008 show a modest improvement of 6%, but an overall result that is still well below a 50% pass rate (DoE, 2008b). The 2008 results indicate that eight out of every 10 learners obtained less than 50% for language skills and mathematics; and about 35% of Grade 3 learners countrywide obtained between 0% and 34% for literacy, which included reading (Hugo, 2010: 133). Generally, these evaluations have

shown shockingly low levels of reading ability across the country as large numbers of school children were found to be unable to read (DoE, 2008).

Therefore, in response to the results of the Department of Education's 2001 and 2004 national systemic evaluations (DoE, 2008b); the PIRLS 2006 (Howie, Venter, van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Scherman, Archer, 2007) and SAQMEQ II (Moloi & Strauss, 2005), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) has implemented a number of reading and writing initiatives, known as campaigns, strategies or programmes, in order to address the low literacy concerns in the primary schools. When the government launched the National Reading Strategy (DoE, 2008b), aimed at promoting a nation of life-long readers and life-long learners. By launching the National Reading Strategy, the South African government sought to highlight the extent of difficulties faced by educators in teaching reading. The strategy was meant to also address the concerns of the low levels of reading ability that were established in two systematic evaluations conducted by the Department of Education across the country in 2001 and 2004. In developing the National Strategy for Reading, South Africa participated in a number of United Nations development campaigns such as the UNESCO Literacy Decade 2003-2013, and the Education for All (EFA) campaign, which aimed to increase the literacy rates in South Africa by 50% by the year 2015 (DoE, 2008b). Underpinning these campaigns, were the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in which literacy was at its heart (DoE, 2008b). In the South African National Department of Education's National Strategy for Reading in the Foundation Phase the need to develop reading and literacy is summarised thus:

There are various reasons for South Africa's loss of reading. Traditional societies and orders of authority have been undermined by relentless "progress". Most children grow up without the intimate interaction of story-telling because of a breakdown of family and communal structures and the hegemony of radio and television. Apartheid education reduced the fullness of learning drastically, with its emphasis on a thin gruel of basic skills. The mission schools intense engagement with a small, limiting, yet still valuable set of texts, produced people strong in conceptual and moral confidence, qualities that have been badly eroded since the introduction of Bantu Education (DoE, 2008b: 13).

The above observation highlights the extent to which the literacy and numeracy crisis in South Africa is blamed on the Bantu education system which the Apartheid

government designed for black children. Bantu education was characterised by the introduction of poor public education for blacks in 1953 and the withdrawal of state subsidies from mission schools. These measures were among the most controversial that the National Party (NP) government had ever taken. Bantu education always lagged far behind white education with respect to Apartheid government per capita spending on black children and the ratio of educator to learners in the classroom. Critics of the policy argued that Hendrik Verwoerd, its political architect, deliberately starved black education of funds to make certain that black children remained poorly educated. Black children were provided with inferior education attained under poor infrastructure and scarce learning and teaching resources.

The legacy of poor Bantu education, which is synonymous with Apartheid, is evident in present day South African township and rural schools. The inherited Apartheid legacy pertains to current

[...] institutional inequalities and differences between so-called former white schools and so-called former coloured or black schools. The inequalities relate to the delivery and quality of education, to the procedures and practices that weigh against so-called former coloured or black school (Banda, 2000: 58)

It is known that most educators in township and rural schools are a product of inferior Bantu education. Even though the current black learners are taught under a new political dispensation they still receive unequal education compared to that of their counterparts in the former model C schools. I term this phenomenon the Bantu education inertia. By this term I mean the after effects of Bantu education such as poor infrastructure and poor education prevalent in black schools. This phenomenon characterises a spill over of the Apartheid legacy to the current education system in form poorly trained Bantu education educators and poorly resourced schools. The results of PIRLS 2006 show that fewer young teachers are entering the system. Most learners are taught by these older teachers, but there is no relationship with learners' reading literacy scores (PIRLS, 2016). Poor education infrastructure is still found in rural and township schools, and even schools built after independence do not meet the quality of the former model C

schools built by the Apartheid government. In this regard, since 1994 when South Africa attained independence, government has tried to improve the delivery and quality of education in the former black and coloured schools, to try to redress the educational imbalances of the past. This redress has been through increased government funding, retraining of educators and the introduction of a new curriculum, which is discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. Several other initiatives implemented by government since 1994 were not only meant to desegregate schooling but to improve the quality of education in black and coloured schools. An initiative of note has been the Annual Performance Plan 2016/17 (DBE, 2016) whose aims are summed as:

[...] the provision of high-quality learning and teaching materials (such as workbooks), the introduction of world class, standardised Annual National Assessments (ANA), the provision of school infrastructure, universal access to Early Childhood Development (ECD) and educator development initiatives (DBE, 2016: 19).

Located within the Annual Performance Plan 2016/17 is the Foundations for Learning (FFL) campaign launched in 2008 (DoE, 2008c). The FFL was a national campaign meant to address the poor levels of literacy and numeracy in the General Education and Training (GET) band. The main aim of the FFL was to improve literacy and numeracy skills (DoE, 2008c: 3) and increase the average literacy and numeracy results in South African schools to 50% over a period of four years, by providing appropriate resources, detailed daily lesson plans and establishing teacher forums in all districts (Meier, 2011). Located within FFL was the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) which was highlighted as one of the non-negotiable assessment instruments to be administered in all primary schools in order to provide standardised evidence of learner achievement in literacy and numeracy that would enable educators and districts to plan effectively for the improvement of literacy and numeracy results (Meier, 2011). The ANAs are national-standardised tests identified as one of the key strategies by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to annually measure learner achievement in Grades 3, 6 and 9; and track learner performance in the system year-on-year so that key problems in mathematics and language teaching and learning can be identified and remedied in the lower school grades (DBE, 2016). This is one of the

most important policy developments in the last 10 years. In principle, the ANAs provide some standardised indication of learning at the primary grades allowing for the early identification and remediation of learning deficits (Spaull, 2013).

The first ANAs were administered to 90% of South African schools November 2008 as a trial run. The results of the trial run showed that the majority of learners in Gauteng province achieved below 50%, which was below the target of Foundations for Learning (FFL) campaign. The actual Annual National Assessments (ANAs) were implemented in February 2011 as national standardised tests of achievement for Grades 1-6 and Grade 9 (Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2014). The results of the 2011 ANAs reveal that in Grade 3, the national average performance in Literacy, stood at 35% (Department of Basic Education, 2011a). The 2013 ANA results reveal serious learning deficits in the primary school system: only a third of children in Grades 3 and 6 passed the numeracy tests and only about a 50% passed the language ones. The results also show that by Grade 9 the average pass rate in mathematics declined to only 14%, as a result of accumulated learning deficits from the lower grades (Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2014). While the ANA results have improved over the three years, the extent of this improvement has been questioned, as experts have pointed out huge problems with the reliability and validity of these results (NEEDU, 2013; Spaull, 2013). Some disturbing pointers to poor literacy levels in the primary schools are illustrated in the Report on Qualitative Analysis of ANA 2014 as shown in Figure 1.3

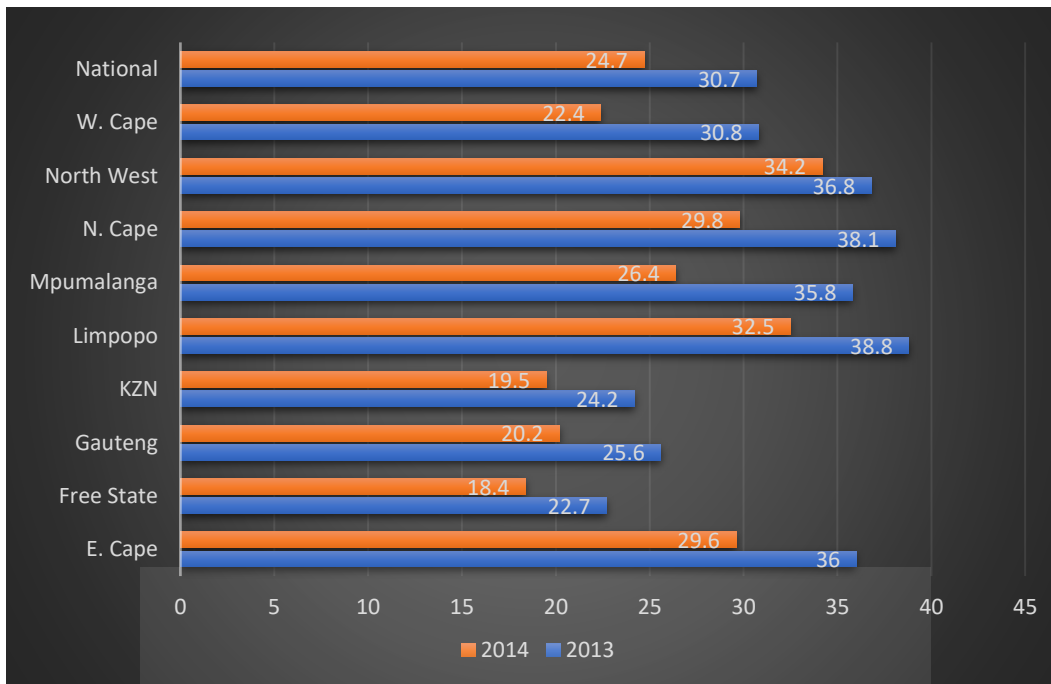


Figure 1.3: Percentage provincial not achieved level in Grade 3 Home Language (Source: Department of Basic Education, 2014: 78)

Figure 1.3 illustrates the ‘not achieved’ performance level of learners for Grade 3 Home Language in 2013 and 2014. Although all provinces recorded very high ‘not achieved’ percentages in 2013, the 2014 improvements were insignificantly small because they were numerically small. Similarly, the significant 10% national average drop does not provide a true reflection of the low literacy problems recorded in provinces such as Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Northern Cape and North West. These provinces have the majority of learners and large numbers with the ‘not achieved’ percentages.

In summary, the empirical evidence cited in this chapter gives insight to the worrying levels of literacy in South African primary schools. This problem is also echoed in several media reports, indicating poor literacy rates among South African learners. As far back as April 2005, *The Educator* reported that in July 2001 more than a third of South Africans aged sixteen years and older were illiterate (MacFarlane, 2005). In 2011, a confidential Department of Education report highlighted government failure to improve the performance of Grade 3 and 6 learners in mathematics and literacy (Gower, Mohlala & Pretorious, 2009). The report reveals that, from eight provinces, of all the Grade 3 and 6 learners who

wrote Annual National Assessments tests in mathematics and literacy in 2008, about 663 000 achieved marks below 50%. About 60% of the Grade 3 learners achieved results below 50% for mathematics and language literacy. The performance of 75% of the Grade 6 learners in literacy was below 50%. In her media briefing in 2011, Angie Motshekga, the current Minister of Basic Education expressed concern that “Many of our learners lack proper foundations in literacy and numeracy and so they struggle to progress in the system and into post-school education and training” (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Two years later, in her 2013 media briefing the Minister of Basic Education again expressed concern that “Learner achievement in both language and mathematics in the Foundation Phase is largely of inadequate quality and level” (SAnews.gov.za, 2013). Her remark was in reaction to the poor achievement of Grade 3 learners in the first Annual National Assessments (ANA) benchmark tests administered by the Department of Basic Education in primary schools in 2011. Therefore, the poor literacy competence of South African primary school learners in the ANA is consistent with their poor achievements in other systematic tests administered by PIRLS and SAQMEQ.

Participation in PIRLS and SACMEQ, demonstrates the government’s attempt to standardise the South African education system in order to bring it on par with that of other developing countries. This standardisation is meant to address the disturbingly high levels of poor literacy competence in South African primary schools. As shown throughout this chapter, the South African learners have been performing consistently poorly in international tests of numeracy and literacy, with their reading scores among the world’s worst, including much of Africa. The poor performance observed in most township and rural schools is problematic as South Africa is achieving numeracy and literacy scores below countries with similar education budgets and below some African countries, such as Zambia and Malawi, which have lower budgets (Hofmeyer, 2010; Moloji & Strauss, 2005).

Finally, although insight on poor literacy in South Africa has been gained from a number of literacy studies that have been undertaken by both national and

international bodies, there is still a gap in addressing the problem of poor literacy in early childhood education. Literacy research studies undertaken in South Africa and poor countries of the world have not only focused on poor literacies but educational policies formulated to improve literacy levels. In most cases early childhood and early school literacy policies have focused mainly on reading rather than on language and literacies (Prinsloo, 2005). As such, vast literature in early childhood education provides insight on the widespread problems regarding reading and writing in South African schools, especially those located in townships and rural areas (Fleisch, 2008; Moloi & Strauss, 2005; Horne, 2005).

1.4 Research aims and objectives

The underlying purpose of my research is to enhance the understanding of early childhood education in a South African context. In this study, my primary aim is to investigate the nature of young children's early encounters with literacy and the implications of these encounters for their later development as readers and writers in schools. In order to realise the aim of the study, the research objectives are:

1. to map the literacy practices in which young children engage at home, in their township and at school,
2. to examine how the children's literacy practices manifest in the teaching and learning process,
3. to examine the implications of children's encounters with literacy for their careers as readers and writers in-school and out-of-school and,
4. to examine how children's out-of-school literacy practices can contribute to developing schooled literacy.

1.5 The research questions

Consistent with the mentioned aims and objectives, the following overarching question is posed to guide the research:

What are the early childhood literacy practices of Grade 3 learners in a multilingual Johannesburg township and how can this knowledge contribute to teaching and learning?

To answer aspects of the overarching research question, four subsidiary questions, embedded in different data analysis chapters of the research process, are posed:

1. How can the literacy practices of young children be mapped at home and at school?
2. What are the implications of children's early encounters with literacy at home for their careers as readers and writers?
3. How can educators and parents use knowledge of children's literacy practices to enhance children's literate selves?
4. How do these literacy practices manifest in the teaching and learning process?

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is situated within a sociocultural, sociolinguistic framework. I chose the sociocultural framework because it addresses the origins of children's literacy competence as it contends that literacy learning does not begin in school. As I examine the literacy practices that children engage in outside formal school, I embrace Goodman's (1996) contention that before children come to school they already possess a wealth of literacy experiences and they have developed an implicit knowledge of language. This perspective rejects the idea that all children come to school without a literacy (Goodman, 1996). It contends that even at a very young age children bring to school a wealth of literacy experiences based on their own cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the children want to build on these forms of experiences and not what the curriculum always prescribes to them (Lambirth, 2007). The empirical evidence used to support the problem under investigation is based on systematic tests and evaluations undertaken by the South African government and other bodies to measure the literacy competence of children. Interest in literacy competence is based on the cognitive theorists' belief that stages of reading or writing development are necessary to guide teaching; the stages illuminate the competence that is optimal for specific purposes, and they identify and explain the inadequacies exhibited by certain

groups (Chall, 1983; Ehri, 2005). Lastly, the sociolinguistic framework helped me develop an insight into how the children's literacy practices are socially constructed. The sociolinguistic framework is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.7 Scope and potential contribution of the study

As explained in previous sections, this study has been motivated by the vast literature on the poor literacy competence of children in South African schools as documented in systematic studies cited earlier in this chapter. There is, however, great need to explore and address the numerous concerns about alarmingly high levels of poor literacy competence among children in South African primary schools. Not only do Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) report that comparative to English-speaking countries, little research on literacy development exists on the African continent, they also advocate the need for more South African-based research. In reality, extensive literature shows that there is very little up-to-date quantitative data on the ECD sector in South Africa (NEEDU, 2013, 2012). The only national study on ECD took place in the year 2000 and is now nearly seventeen years old. This nation-wide ECD audit provided accurate information on the nature and extent of ECD provisioning, services, and resources across the country. Only the Western Cape Province has a more recent ECD survey, completed in 2009 (NDA, 2012). My study, therefore, attempts to offer important insights into the development of early childhood literacy in sociocultural contexts, through close examination of the literacy practices of Grade 3 learners in a South African township. This study will, furthermore, attempt to show the ways in which literacy practices can reflect the different cultural and literacy landscapes. Through this study, I hope to shed light on the myriad ways in which young children navigate, negotiate, make sense of, appropriate from, and transform the various literacy landscapes and contexts that surround them. Furthermore, this study illustrates the ways in which the children's out-of-school literacy practices are significant (or not) to the practices of formal schooling, and it also illustrates the ways in which young children negotiate these different landscapes of home, community, and school.

According to Luke (2003a), important goals for current literacy research are particularly important as a way to counteract the homogenising force of current early childhood policy in South Africa. This study will also provide an important body of literacy information about a “new” generation of learners that is relatively new to the South African context. Although research has demonstrated that creating culturally-compatible instruction in schools helps learners achieve in literacy, it is also clear that strategies that work in one community cannot necessarily be transferred to other communities where cultural and linguistic patterns may be completely different (Foster, 1995). Therefore, this study will provide important insights into the literacy practices of the young children in an urban township community, which educators may use to effectively work with this specific community.

Finally, this study will add to the growing body of work that informs scholarship on school, home and community literacy practices. A deeper examination of literacy practices in various communities allows researchers a better theoretical understanding of the ways in which culture influences beliefs about and practices of literacy. Likewise, studies such as this one can lead to a greater theoretical understanding of the ways in which the various practices of schools, families and communities transact with each other, and transform individual pathways to adult literacy practices. This study has the potential to add to the body of knowledge about early childhood literacy practices in developing countries, particularly in the post-independent South African context. It is further hoped that this research will help provide insights into foundation phase educators’ understanding of young children’s literacy practices and how children develop and learn in school and outside school. This could potentially inform the design and implementation of high quality ECD programmes within the South African education system.

This study is significant to the post-independence South African education terrain as it examines early childhood education under a new political dispensation. This study the potential to create awareness among policy makers and educationists aware of the extent of the literacy problems in South Africa primary education

reflected in systematic evaluations such as PIRLS (Howie et. al., 2007), SAQMED and other studies done by the DoE. The findings of PIRLS and SAQMED offer an insight to the magnitude of the literacy crisis levels in South Africa. With such large numbers of children performing so poorly in these assessment tests, it can be argued that it is schooling that is failing children rather than the children failing these tests (Dixon, Place & Kholowa, 2008). I would argue that the print assessment on which the literacy benchmarks are determined are based on reading and writing competence. This approach seems to ignore the other valuable knowledge systems, such as oral indigenous knowledge that learners bring to the learning process. Martin Prew, head of the Centre for Education Policy Development noted that “Most children arrive in school illiterate and leave school functionally illiterate. That is a serious indictment of our profession and of the nation” (Gower, Mohlala & Pretorius, 2009). This study also tries to illustrate that literacy extends beyond reading and writing to include oral, audio, and visual (Kress, 2003). Although there has been much argument acknowledging multiliteracies in today’s classrooms (Hagood, 2003; Healy, 2004; Luke, 2003a, 2003b), there seem to be very few multiliteracies perspectives (further developed in Chapter 2 and subsequent chapters) in early childhood classrooms in South Africa. Multiliteracies theory is further developed in the theoretical framework.

As will be noted in Chapter 2, there is much literacy research in schools, though Lankshear and Knobel (2003) have argued that only a smaller body of research specific to early childhood education exists. While there has been a great deal of research on children learning from parents or educators, there has been little research on young children as learners in communities or networks that include people in their schools, neighbourhoods and extended families (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004: 10). Anning, Cullen and Flear (2004) suggest a correlation between the present lack of research studies and the perceived significance of early childhood education. Just as early childhood is itself a culturally constructed way of being (Cannella, 1997), literacy is culturally and socially constructed and needs to be examined not only for definitions, but to understand who is served by particular definitions and who is excluded by the expanded view of early childhood literacies

that I explore in this study. One of the possible contributions of my work is the design of a new framework in early childhood pedagogy, offering a more recent understanding of the learning and teaching of literacy in the 21st century in South African primary schools. It is perceived that there should be a longer term strategic issue of recognising and using the potential of the early childhood years to address literacy issues in ways that will contribute towards providing opportunities for people to develop and embed literacy in their own languages, in their daily lives in South Africa, and across the rest of Africa. To do this, I have sought ways to demonstrate the need for change in pedagogy in the early literacy education and to help demonstrate what change might look like in practice. This particular view is preferred in this study because the study partly focuses on pedagogy employed in teaching literacies. I use the term pedagogy as described by Street and Street (1991: 144),

[...] not in the narrow sense of specific skills and tricks of the trade used by educators but in the broader sense of institutionalised processes of teaching and learning, usually associated with the school but increasingly identified in home practices associated with reading and writing [...] pedagogy in this sense has taken on the character of an ideological force controlling social relations in general and conceptions of reading and writing in particular.

In summary, this chapter provided a general introduction to my study, which began by providing the background to the study. This was followed by the discussion of the problem that outlined the magnitude of the literacy crisis in South Africa. It was followed by the section that discusses the research problem, identifies the research purpose, aims and objectives, and the research questions. Theoretical frameworks informing the study were outlined. The scope of the study and its significance were also discussed. In summary, this study documents the literacy practices of five Grade 3 learners at a South African township school in Gauteng Province. In the following section I briefly discuss some of the key concepts that map this study.

1.8 Concept clarification

Early Childhood Literacy refers to learning occurring in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Early Childhood Literacy is based on Early Childhood Education (ECE) Policies. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the internationally accepted term

while Early Childhood Development (ECD) is widely used in South Africa. For this study, Early Childhood Education (ECE), is defined as education focusing on children from Grade R to Grade 3 (6 to 9 years of age). This is normally referred to as the Foundation Phase of primary schooling system in South Africa. Education in this phase is not confined to the classroom but can take place in informal spaces outside school or during play as will be illustrated in the presentation and discussion of data in this study.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years of age with the active participation of their parents and caregivers. The purpose of these policies is to protect the child's rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential (Department of Education, 2001). The term ECD conveys the importance of a holistic approach to child development and signifies an appreciation of the importance of considering a child's health, nutrition, education, psycho-social and additional environmental factors within the context of the family and the community. The education of the child can occur both at home and in school. It is consistent with an understanding of the developmental process of children and in line with the international definition (Department of Education, 2001).

Foundation Phase: In South Africa the education system is organised in four phases; namely: Foundation Phase (Grades R-3); Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6) and Senior Phase (Grades 7-9) and Further Education and Training (Grades 10-12). However, this study focuses on Grade 3s that fall within the Foundation Phase. In this phase learners do English First Additional Language (FAL) and use another language, usually an African language mother tongue or Afrikaans, as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). Learners in this phase, also receive instruction in English or a home language determined by the school governing body (SGB). In the Foundation Phase, the language learning is organised in a programme called the Literacy Learning Programme. In this programme, the main focus is to give

children foundations of reading, writing and basic literacy (Department of Education, 2008b).

Literacy is defined as the ability to understand, use and reflect on written texts in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate effectively in society (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2009: 14) (OECD). Literacy incorporates a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, listening, viewing, reading and writing (OECD, 2009: 14). PIRLS further defines literacy as an "ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual". The definition provided by PIRLS aligns with the position of GDE (2010: 5) that "By the end of primary school, all Gauteng learners can read and write fluently for purpose and for enjoyment". However, this definition seems narrow as it overlooks the call for more expansive definitions of literacy. Literacy "has changed and is still changing because of social, economic, cultural and technological changes" (Kress, 2010: 5).

Mother tongue instruction: Underpinning the current South African Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) document is a language education paradigm called 'additive bilingualism'. Within this paradigm, emphasis is placed on literacy in mother tongue and the use of mother-tongue medium education (MTE) for as long as possible, with the addition of at least one other language which would complement rather than replace the mother tongue. The LiEP recognises the importance of the use of mother tongue for learning for at least the first six grades as an essential step in ensuring the development of literacy and numeracy. In the South African education system, this has been interpreted as Home Language (mother tongue/L1) plus English for the majority of learners. Provision is made in LiEP for a variety of additive bilingual models and language maintenance programmes (DoE, 2008).

The Gauteng Province Literacy Strategy (GPLS) 2010-2014 is a strategy aiming to improve literacy teaching in 792 underperforming schools in the province and

ensure that 60% of learners in the province perform at 50% and above” (GDE, 2010a: 4). Mathematics intervention was added to the GPLS in 2012 and 832 underperforming schools have now been targeted to improve reading literacy as well as numeracy achievement (Masterson, 2013). GPLS is thus currently known as the Gauteng Province Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS), but this study investigates the literacy component only.

1.9 Outline of Chapters

The research study comprises seven chapters. **Chapter 1** aimed to provide an overview of the reasons this research study has been undertaken. The chapter introduced the study by providing a background, the statement of the problem, rationale, aims and objectives, potential contribution of the study and it ends by defining key terms central to the study. **Chapter 2** provides the literature review contextualising the study. An overview of the major issues such as poor literacy and language in education, that constitute early childhood education internationally and in South Africa is provided. In order to contextualise the study, this chapter builds on the discussion in **Chapter 1** and provides a background to the international trends in literacy development. It also discusses historical as well as current developments in the South African education system, since 1994. The chapter discusses some of the radical changes in the South African education landscape due to policy and curriculum factors and how these may have played a role in literacy development, particularly in the Foundation Phase of schooling (Grades 1-3). **Chapter 3** provides a theoretical and conceptual framework overview which acts as an explanatory tool for the findings associated with the study. In order to contextualise the study, this chapter builds on the discussion in **Chapter 1** and provides a background to the major theories that inform the study. It introduces and discusses concepts and aspects of the theoretical framework. **Chapter 4** provides a detailed description of the research design, and the methodology used in the research, focusing on research sites and the characteristics of the research participants. The chapter provides reasons why I chose the case study approach and the advantages and disadvantages of this approach. **Chapter 5** presents the findings and analysis of literacy instruction in

the Grade 3 classroom. The chapter further gives an overview of the implications of these practices to the learning process. This chapter also provides a portrait of the in-school literacy practices and describes the educators' literacy instruction in the Foundation Phase. **Chapter 6** is a presentation and analysis of out-of-school literacy practices. The chapter specifically focuses on the views of parents of young children engaged in literacy practice, and observations of children's literacy practices in sites out-of-school. In this chapter, the data is categorised into the themes and sub-themes that emerged from interview responses and observations. The analysis of the data is made against the backdrop of the literature review in **Chapter 3**. The chapter foregrounds the responses of parents of the young children engaged in early literacy practices. It also focuses on observations made of children engaging in literacy practices and artefacts collected in the study. Finally, in **Chapter 7**, the conclusion and recommendations are presented. This chapter summarises the findings in relation to the relevance of early childhood literacy to the learning situation in South African schools. As a result of the findings, the study makes some suggestions for future research in the field of early childhood literacies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I provided the background and orientation to the study, through focusing on the research problem of the 'crisis' (Fleisch, 2008), in South African primary school system. I also presented brief literature insights into the rationale of the research. In this chapter, I provide a detailed literature review pertaining to major issues in early childhood education internationally and in South Africa. In order to contextualise the study, this chapter builds on the discussion in Chapter 1. I also discuss historical as well as current developments in the South African education system, to show the effects they have on teaching and learning in primary school. Thereafter, I present the radical changes in the South African education landscape since 1994 due to policy and curriculum factors. This is to demonstrate how these changes affect children's literacy development, particularly in the Foundation Phase of schooling (Grades 1-3).

Underlying the literature, is the recognition that there is a vast corpus of research into early childhood literacy problems internationally (Bloch, 2009; Fleisch, 2008). Literature on literacy problems indicates that when governments identify a crisis in literacy they refer to issues deeper than pass rates in systematic tests and uses of literacy. Government advocates reforming schools as a way of addressing these deeper societal problems and make the general public see them in narrow terms as literacy problems and not as wider issues about society and social change (Gee, 2012: 30). The next section provides an overview of global trends in literacy development.

2.2 Global trends in literacy development

The changing orientations to the teaching of reading and writing to children, in South Africa and elsewhere, has been characterised by behaviourist models of learning, teaching and skills-development, on the one hand, and by progressivist, learner-centred models, on the other (Prinsloo & Bloch, 1999). Recent critical

perspectives have come to outline the variable dimensions of literacy across different social, institutional and cultural contexts, pointing to multiple forms and practices, and changing 'social languages' that shape specific literacies. These perspectives include those of New Literacy Studies (Street, 1985; Gee, 1996; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996; Barton & Hamilton, 1998); the multiple literacies approach of the New London Group (1996) and the 'genre studies' approach (Halliday, 2005; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). These theorists have argued that a unitary model of literacy at work in schooling has served to marginalise the communicative and cognitive resources brought to the school context by 'non-mainstream' children, re-describing their cultural and linguistic specificity in terms of models of individual and cultural deficit (Prinsloo, 1999: 15a). A cultural deficit implies that the school context provides an unwelcoming habitus for disadvantaged, marginalised students (Sheeran, Brown & Baker, 2007). The term deficit, in this instance, refers to "capital deficit" as derived from the "capital" theories of Pierre Bourdieu (1986a), further discussed in Chapter 3. Since learners from marginalised backgrounds seem to have "capital deficit", researchers argue that schools fail these learners by not teaching them how to deal with the varieties of literacy practices (and the institutional discourses of which they are part) that are encountered in non-schooling contexts.

Globally, the need to measure literacy by standardised test scores exerts pressure on governments, education authorities and students. Despite the reservations about quantitative evaluations of education levels in developing countries, their impact is undeniable in terms of the amount of concern and attention they raise. For example, responding to the findings of the various evaluations, the South African Department of Education has prioritised literacy in a number of ways. It has prioritised the distribution, to all primary schools, of text books and other textual material, which are referred to as Reading Toolkits (DoE, 2008). Literacy educators are caught between policies which advocate for a standardized test score as an appropriate literacy measure and enacting instruction that creates a conducive atmosphere for students to acquire literacies. Extensive longitudinal research in the developed world demonstrates the importance of children's early

developmental experiences for educational and broader life outcomes (Camilli, Vargas, Ryan & Barnett, 2010; Ludwig & Miller, 2007). These studies document the benefits of early childhood education and formal preschool programmes on children's school readiness. They argue that children from low-income and otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds benefit the most from these programmes. On the other hand, in the developing world, the problem of low literacy is also existent. There is relatively little evidence available on the developmental effects of early childhood education (ECE) programmes on children in sub-Saharan Africa (Zuilkowski, Fink, Moucheraud & Matafwali, 2012). Though evidence supporting early childhood education in developed countries is strong, it cannot be assumed that this evidence translates directly to the context of sub-Saharan African countries. However, several recent studies conducted in Kenya, Zanzibar and Uganda (Malmberg, Mwaura, & Sylva, 2011; Mwaura, Sylva & Malmberg, 2008); Botswana (Taiwo & Tyolo, 2002); South Africa (Liddell & Rae, 2001); and Guinea and Cape Verde (Jaramillo & Tietjen, 2001) support the argument that early childhood education is just as important in preparing African children for future academic success as it is for those living in the developed world. Therefore, measuring literacy skills by test scores is considered placing literacy in a category of skills acquisition, which posits literacy as a technical set of skills to be learned or acquired. This is an autonomous approach to literacy (Street, 1995) (please see Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion). In other words, in this approach, skills are not shaped or influenced by social or cultural factors and thus are considered autonomous. In the following section I present a view on the literacy trends in South Africa.

2.3 Literacy trends in South Africa: a curriculum perspective

Since 1994 the South African education system has undergone extensive change, as the government's attempt to improve the quality of education for all. Since then, the government has implemented several policies accompanied by curriculum reforms. These policies reflect the government's challenging aspirations to provide equal education opportunities for all children given the realities of the South African unequal education and socioeconomic context. The

new education system is based upon the principles of *equity, quality* and *access* (DoE, 2001a). The following Table 2.1 provides a summary of the curriculum changes since South Africa attained independence in 1994.

Year	Curriculum reform
1997	Launch of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) (Botha, 2002)
2002	Review of Curriculum 2005 (Chisholm, 2003)
2004	Initial implementation of Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in the Foundation Phase (DoE, 2003)
2009	Review of Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (Dada, Dipholo, Hoadley, Khembo, Muller & Volmink, 2009)
2012	Review of Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (Dada, Dipholo, Hoadley, Khembo, Muller & Volmink, 2009)

Table 2.1: Summary of curriculum reforms in South Africa since 1997

As illustrated in Table 2.1, during the last 15 years the South African schooling system has experienced waves of curriculum reform, the beginning of the curriculum reforms being the introduction of Curriculum 2005 in 1997, which marked a departure from content-based teaching and learning to the supposed more progressive Outcomes Based Education (OBE), which Jansen (1998) perceived to be a political response to apartheid schooling rather than a curriculum meant to address the modalities of change at classroom level. OBE was a student-centred approach to education based on Spady's (1994) philosophy of achieving learning outcomes (Lombard & Grosser, 2008). The emphasis was not on what the teacher wanted to achieve, but rather on what the learner should know, understand, demonstrate and become (Botha, 2002). This curriculum reform was subsequently followed by the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) (Department of Education, 2002). The most recent curriculum change has been the introduction of the National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) Grades R-12, promulgated in January 2012, as the policy statement for teaching and learning in South African schools (DBE, 2011). The most important component of the NCS is the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which is a highly structured curriculum, stipulating the aim, scope, content and assessment for

each subject from Grades R-12. The CAPS is viewed as a comprehensive and concise curriculum “that will provide details on what content teachers ought to teach and assess on a grade-by-grade and subject-by-subject basis” (Department of Education, 2010: 1). However, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) has contributed very little to address the literacy ‘crisis’ (Fleisch, 2008) in the schools.

The changes outlined above have been designed to improve teaching and learner performance, yet they have placed new demands on educators in the classroom, not least on those who teach mathematics and languages. Upskilling educators remains a huge challenge, despite significant government spending on upgrading serving teachers’ qualifications through universities, as well as numerous short-term and off-site training workshops for serving teachers, run by district personnel or non-governmental organisations and funded by government or donors (DBE, 2011). Although many curriculum changes have been implemented in order to address low literacy levels, it seems that the intended results have not been realised. Therefore, a number of reading and literacy initiatives have also been put in place by the Department of Education in order to address the poor literacy levels in schools. These curriculum reforms are informed by some of the policies discussed in the next section.

2.4 Policy framework on early childhood education in South Africa

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, government has developed numerous Policy documents and laws that acknowledge the universal right of children to early childhood development (ECD) as well as the developmental role of early childhood development in South Africa (DBE, 2016). The numerous policies (please see Section 1.4 in Chapter 1) were aimed at addressing the inequalities in the education system as well as address the reading and literacy crisis in South Africa. Some of the prominent policies meant to address ECD included the National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996), the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) and the Policy for Early Childhood Development (Department of Education, 1996). Policy shifts in approaches to early schooling in South Africa reveal influences of more interactive approaches to learning and child

development, as well as the partial influence of emergent literacy arguments (Prinsloo & Bloch, 1999). With the new policy shift acknowledging the importance of early childhood education, this has meant that the South African Department of Education now follows international trends recognizing early childhood development (ECD) as a continuous phase from birth to 9 years of age (Prinsloo & Bloch, 1999). This, for the Department of Education, ensures that education within the formative years follows an integrated child-centred approach in which the learner is developed 'holistically' in both social and academic skills (Department of Education, June 1997). Policy statements at a national level have displayed shifts towards communication and meaning from a skills-based concern (see, for example, Department of Education, 1997- Foundation Phase Learning programmes p. iv).

In the curriculum framework of the Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development (ECD), two points made with reference to literacy demonstrate an intention to shift emphasis, and a lack of clarity (Department of Education, 1996). In the policy document, the term 'improvement' is suggestive of approaches that construct the backgrounds of some children in terms of 'cultural deficit' and accompanying 'restricted linguistic competency' (DoE, 1996). Both these terms point to disharmony between a child's home and school. In the Foundation Phase, the overarching goal of language development is effective communication. In this phase the focus is on the improvement of children's listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. However, practitioners argue for the need to assist children in their emergent literacy which will lead to their ability to read, write, listen and speak by the end of the Foundation Phase (Grade 3) (DoE, 1996). On the other hand, 'effective communication' is presented as a culturally neutral ideal, whereas what counts as effective communication in any social setting bears the marks of power, authority, and social contestation. There is no doubt that this type of approach aims to promote a different kind of practice to that of the past. Within the South African context, quality ECD programmes are associated with "child-centred learning environments with a focus on play and programmes that provide varied and age appropriate experiences for young children before formal

schooling” (Department of Education, 2009: 33). Policymakers view these programmes as providing indicators for “school readiness, to monitor and evaluate the progress of children on a national scale” (Ebrahim, 2014: 70). In addition, quality is equated with schooling outcomes in terms of standardisation of the school curriculum:

The early years of a child are critical for the acquisition of concepts, skills and attitudes that lay the foundations for lifelong learning. These include the acquisition of language, perceptual/motor skills required for learning to read and write, basic numeracy concepts and skills, problem-solving skills and a love for learning. With quality ECD provision, education efficiency would improve, as children would acquire the basic concepts, skills and attitudes required for successful learning and development prior to or shortly after entering the system. The system would be freed of under-age and underprepared learners, who have proven to be the most at-risk in terms of school failure and dropout (Department of Education, 2001b: 11).

In current international and national debates around what constitutes quality ECD programme, several aspects of this statement are of particular importance. Firstly, the view of quality and its association with school readiness (Moss, 2013). Secondly, the statement promotes the image of learning as the acquisition of a set of distinct and autonomous skills that children must possess to be successful in school viz. language, perceptual/motor skills required for learning to read and write, basic numeracy concepts and skills, problem-solving skills etc. Finally, there is the assumption that the acquisition of these skills would lead to effective education of children, lifelong learning and efficiency of the system. I therefore argue that early childhood education is a major concern in both developed and developing countries.

2.5 The Gauteng Department of Education literacy improvement programme

In addition to a number of national initiatives meant to determine the effectiveness of literacy interventions (Hoadley, 2016), district literacy improvement programmes were also initiated. One of the most publicised interventions is the Gauteng Department of Education’s literacy improvement programmes is the Gauteng Province Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS) (Fleisch & Schöer, 2014). At the time the data were collected for this study, the GPLMS was being used. The GPLMS is relevant to this study as a pedagogical

approach informing literacy practices in the school where I conducted research. This model draws on four key elements: supporting teaching and learning through the use of trained coaches and provision of lesson plans and materials; supporting the use of school-based assessment and Annual National Assessments (ANA) (discussed in Chapter 1) to improve learner performance; providing a programme of extra school support, particularly for homework assistance; and offering school management support to district officials and members of school management teams (Hoadley, 2016). From 2011, this initiative of the Gauteng Department of Education worked with schools that performed particularly poorly on the Annual National Assessments (ANA). This initiative was taken in response to the province's ANA results having been labelled in the press as "scandalous" (Meier, 2011: xx). Consequently, the Gauteng Department of Education concluded that "the underachievement of Gauteng learners in literacy suggests that existing policies and programmes are less than fully effective [with FFL therefore deemed] not effective to improve the literacy results in Gauteng" and it was abandoned before the four-year period had elapsed (Gauteng Department of Education, 2010: 7). With the aim to address the highlighted underachievement problems, the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) then developed Gauteng Primary Literacy Strategy (GPLS). This strategy was also meant to address the weaknesses in existing policies and programmes. It was implemented in 792 Gauteng primary schools identified as underperforming (GDE, 2010a). The implementation of the programme was in line with former President Jacob Zuma's statement in the 2010 State of the Nation Address focusing on current weaknesses in policies and programmes (GDE, 2010: 10-11):

In our 2010 programme, we want to improve the ability of our children to read, write [...] in the foundation years. Unless we do this, we will not improve the quality of education. Our targets are simple but critical [...] we will assist teachers by providing detailed lesson plans. To students we will provide easy-to-use workbooks [...]

Therefore, the key aim of GPLS was to increase the literacy average in the Gauteng province from between 35% and 40% to at least 60% by 2014. In order to realise this aim, the GPLS focused on the following aspects: ANA for all Grades 3 and 6 learners; workbooks; readers' and teachers' guides; detailed lesson plans; and the

deployment of coaches to assist educators implement the strategy (GDE, 2010a). It is important to note that a Mathematics intervention was added in 2012, and that led the GPLS to be currently known as the Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS). One of the main aims in the GPLMS was to standardise lesson plans to address the issue of slow pace, and to provide remediation to learners who had fallen behind the curriculum (Hoadley, 2016). When GPLMS was launched, a total of 832 underperforming schools were targeted in order to improve their reading literacy and Mathematics achievement (Masterson, 2013). Kutlwano Primary School, where this study is based, is one of the schools labelled as poorly performing and it was placed under the GPLMS. Like FFL strategy, the GPLMS was supposed to be a four-year strategy, with Phase One running from 2011 to 2012 and Phase Two supposed to run from 2013 to 2014.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, at the time when this research was conducted GPLMS was a pedagogical strategy meant to improve primary school reading literacy and mathematics results in the Gauteng Province. However, it has since been replaced with the British Council's primary teacher training course, Certificate in Primary English Language Teaching (CiPELT), which works with South Africa's Department of Basic Education (DBE) to implement a national strategy for teaching English in state primary schools. CiPELT has been adopted as South Africa's principal teacher training tool for the teaching of English in primary schools. Over 200 teacher trainers of children in Grades 1–6 have completed the course. The DBE is now seeking to use CiPELT methodology to deliver teacher training in the country's nine official African languages (DBE, 2015); later to be replaced with The National Collaboration Trust (NECT) (2016-2019) (Education Collaboration Framework, 2013); a project meant to support the design and implementation of learning programmes for Foundation Phase; and provide Monitoring & Evaluation Technical Support to assist with the evaluation of the Foundation Phase component of the NECT District Improvement Programme DIP. The DIP is meant to target poor and medium performing districts (ECF, 2013). However, the two most recent interventions (CiPELT and NECT) that I have cited do not form part of the discussion in my research study but are worth mentioning

as they highlight the extent of inconsistencies in the South African education system. This has an effect in the teaching of literacy in the early years in particular.

2.6 Early childhood and reading in the early years

In the early years, functional literacy is a fundamental skill of a learner's academic success in reading in particular. Research has found that children without the skill of reading will certainly have limited academic, economic, social and even emotional success in school and in later life (Pikulski, 2002). According to the report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NCES, 2012) about 33% of US students in elementary schools were found to read below the basic reading level. This suggests that about one third of the United States elementary student population struggle with literacy and they may likely struggle in later life. The importance of competence in reading in the early grades is underlined by Pikulski (2002) who argues that a child's first grade achievement is a determinant of later reading achievement and children who are not reading with a degree of independence by third grade are likely to have reading difficulty for the rest of their lives (Pikulski, 2002).

Over the past 20 years there has been considerable controversy over the competing emphases to beginning reading known as the 'whole language approach' and the 'phonics approach' (Hempenstall, 2009). Whole language (also known as whole-word, or look-see, or sight word) can be described as teaching reading contextually and holistically, through the use of content rich literature and a print rich environment (Hempenstall, 2009). This approach is based on the premise that teaching is child-centred and language is acquired implicitly. The phonics approach, on the other hand, involves teaching reading explicitly and sequentially, through the relationship of letter-sound correspondence in words. Individual phoneme patterns are studied by segmenting, blending and manipulating individual words (Maddox & Feng, 2013). However, Prinsloo and Bloch (1999) have warned that the 'phonics-whole-language' debate has confined the definition of literacy to mean what goes on in schools and higher education while neglecting the crucial dimension of literacy as social practice. The reading

pedagogy, drawing on the Whole Language approach (Elley, 1991; Goodman, 1992, 2005) says that children learn to read because they are motivated by the reading material to which they are exposed. This observation leads to the debate about literacy pedagogy and the positioning of my study in early childhood education in South Africa.

2.7 Early childhood education in South Africa

The 2015 statistics indicate that the South African population constitutes 8 207 723 children (from birth to six years old) (Statistics South Africa, 2016). The number of children enrolled in ECD is lower than the national average population of children. In 2015, only 685 511 children received the per-child per-day subsidy at an ECD centre. The ECD services, which are primarily provided by NGOs and the private sectors, with government managing service regulation and providing funding, are fundamentally inequitable and disadvantage the poor and vulnerable children (including children with disabilities) (National Gazette 38558 of 13 March 2015). Low ECD enrolments are reported in the three predominantly rural provinces with the largest number of poor children: Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Many young children live in these predominantly rural and poverty-stricken provinces with Limpopo having 76% young children while the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal have 75% and 67% respectively. However, the largely urban Western Cape and Gauteng provinces have 35% of their populations composed of young children. About 79.6% of children living in rural tribal areas live in poor households, compared to 57% in urban informal and rural formal areas and 38% in urban formal areas (National Gazette 38558 of 13 March 2015). The ECD sites catering for predominantly Black African learners have the greatest number of below average ratings on service quality. It is reported that children in most ECD centres in poor areas are overcrowded; basic hygiene standards are not observed and; the children's safety is also compromised. For example, it was observed that in one centre, children utilised a pit latrine, and they used the facilities alone—unaccompanied by educators. This places children at risk of falling into the pit latrine (UNESCO, 2009). According to statistics from the Department of Basic Education in 2016, more than 9 000 schools across South Africa have only

pit latrines for toilets (DBE, 2016). On 20 January 2014, it was reported that a 5-year-old learner at Mahlodumela Primary School, in Limpopo Province, drowned in a pit latrine and died, sparking a nationwide call for safer school infrastructure (Mitchley & Petersen, 2017). Again, on 13 March 2018, another, 5-year-old Grade R learner at Luna Primary School in Bizana, in the Eastern Cape Province, suffered the same fate (Saba, Pather & Macupe, 2018). Reacting to the two incidents, President Ramaphosa directed Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga to conduct an audit of all learning facilities with unsafe structures and to present him with a plan to rectify the challenges (Presence, 2018).

Despite the challenges in providing early childhood development (ECD), the South African Department of Education recognises early childhood development as a continuous phase from birth to 9 years. For the Department of Education, this is to ensure that education within the formative years follows an integrated child-centred approach in which the learner is developed holistically (Department of Education, June 1997). Policy statements at a national level have displayed shifts towards communication and meaning from a skills-based concern (Department of Education, June 1997; Foundation Phase Learning programmes p. iv). First, consistent with the White Paper 1 on Education and Training (DoE, 1995) and the Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development (DoE, 1996) early childhood development (ECD) is defined as an umbrella term applicable to the processes by which children from birth to at least 9 years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially. Early childhood development (ECD) involves a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years of age with the active participation of their parents and caregivers. Its purpose is to protect the child's rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential (DoE, 2001 Education White Paper 5).

Despite the proposed ECD policy framework, provision of early childhood education is still a challenge. For example, the 2014/2015 auditor general's report reveals that 70% of early childhood practitioners/educators are untrained or

underqualified (DBE, 2016), some do not even have a matric — mainly because the Department of Basic education allows them to be employed without proper qualifications and because of a perception amongst people that teaching five-year-olds is easy (John, 2015). Such negative perceptions show a lack of commitment to early childhood education. For example, Mbavhi Moshwane, a qualified Grade R educator at Funda uJabule School,⁸ has complained of the misconception that teaching Grade R is just “about taking care of pupils from morning until afternoon (like) nannies” (John, 2015: 13). Although many policies cited in Chapter one may seem to point to Government’s commitment to early childhood education, there seems to be negative perceptions towards early childhood education. For example there seems to be lack of commitment by government to train more early childhood education educators and in most public schools ECD or Grade R is not part of the mainstream school but run by the school governing body. This lack of commitment has resulted in an acute shortage of qualified foundation phase educators as the 2014/2015 audit highlights, “12 336 Grade R teachers were in need of qualification upgrading” (DBE, 2015). The situation is compounded by the fact that, most trained foundation phase educators prefer to work in urban private ECD centres, while their counterparts who are untrained work in other centres, mostly in poor areas (Bose, 2008). Maundeni (2013) has observed a correlation between urbanisation levels and increased access to ECD centres. He points out that children in urban areas are more likely to be attending ECD centres than those in rural areas. Maundeni (2013) argues that the need for early childhood education (ECE) has been necessitated by modernisation which has brought with it the disintegration of the traditional African social setup in which the extended family was the basic unit within which children were commonly cared for and socialised. The rise of the nuclear family (in which both parents may be in employment) and the single-parent family (in which case the head of the family has to fend for the children) has necessitated the

⁸ A qualified teacher at an education and research school, in Soweto, run by the Faculty of Education of the University of Johannesburg in partnership with the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). In addition to serving the children of Soweto, it serves as training site for teacher education students at the university.

establishment of early childhood development centres as secondary institutions of socialisation to play the role that was previously played by the members of the extended family. Consequently, many pre-school facilities are mostly confined to cities and some bigger villages (Moatshe, 2004). However, in South African there are still marked differences in access to ECD centres for children in formal urban areas and those residing in informal settlements⁹. Children living in formal urban areas (and most likely in better off economic conditions) have greater chances of accessing centre-based early childhood development facilities whereas those in informal urban settlements are likely to have little access to such facilities (Atmore, van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2012). Available information, shows that the enrolment of children under 5 years old, in ECD centres, is highest in the more affluent urban provinces (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The following Figure 2.1 illustrates the provincial ECD attendance statistics.

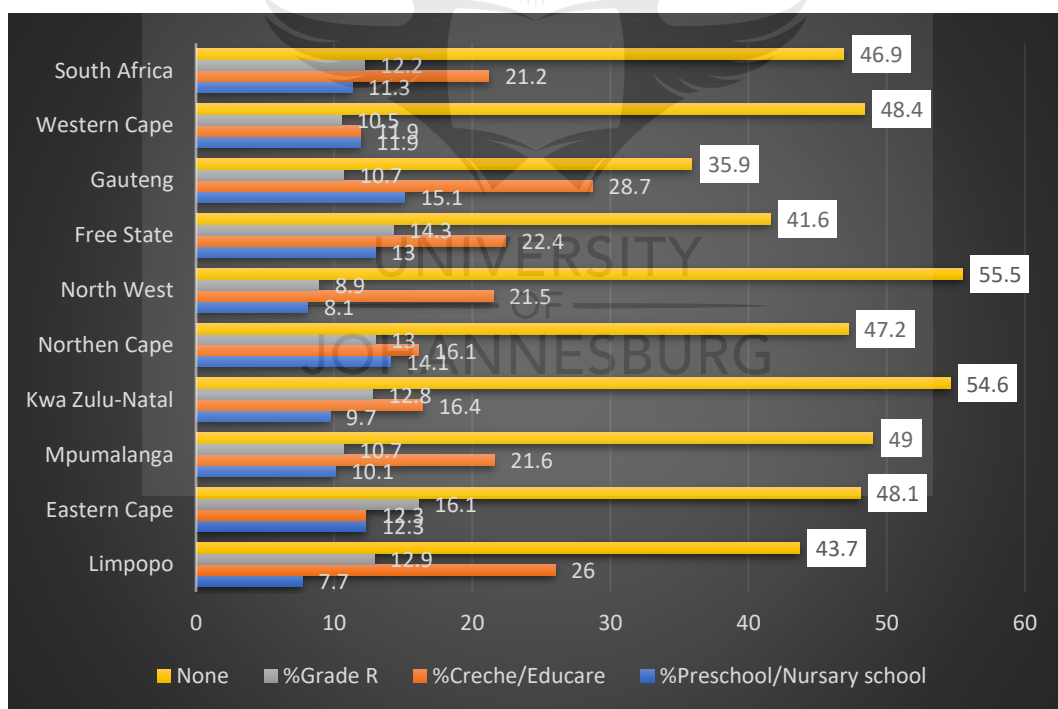


Figure 2.1: Attendance of ECD and school by children aged 0–6 by province, 2016 (Source: Statistics South Africa, 2018: 64).

⁹ These are squatter, or informal settlements commonly found in urban areas where people build dwellings from any materials such as corrugated iron sheets, planks and plastic. Conditions in such settlements are squalid as there may be lack of basic services such as sanitation, water and electricity.

According to Figure 2.1, nearly 47% of children in the 0-6 age group did not attend any educational institution. Wide disparities in attendance exist across provinces. While North West and KwaZulu-Natal had proportionately lower attendance rates compared to the national average and other provinces (55,5% and 55,6% respectively), Gauteng had the lowest proportion of children who did not attend any educational institutions (35,9%) suggesting rural-urban gaps in access. On the other hand, 21,2% of the total children aged 0–6 who were attending educare centres or crèches; Gauteng and Limpopo had the most children attending such facilities (28,7% and 26,0% respectively) (StatsSA, 2018). One reason for this difference could be that most of the ECD facilities in South Africa are private, and thus to access them is difficult for some children, particularly the ones from poor families in provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal and North West. Within the provincial enrolment attendance percentages, there are some demographic differences in access to ECD facilities. For example, white children have the greatest access to ECD centres (46% for ages 0 – 2, and 64% for ages 3 – 4) compared with African children (17% for ages 0 – 2, and 52% for ages 3 – 4). Only 22% of children in the poorest quintile attend an ECD centre while 51% of children in the richest quintile do so. Despite the government’s focus on early childhood development (ECD) in the Children’s Act (Republic of South Africa, 2005) and the phasing in of Grade R and the National Integrated Plan for ECD; there still remain great inequalities in access to quality ECD programmes and concern that not enough is being done to maximise the potential of this sensitive period of childhood (Biersteker, 2012). This is particularly true for the most vulnerable young children – those living in poverty; those living in remote rural areas; and those with disabilities. The fact that many children are excluded from early childhood education programmes means that an increasing number of children are likely to enter primary school with undetected special needs/disabilities by which time it is too late for intervention. These children start primary school ill-prepared to learn or effectively compete with their counterparts who have been exposed to early childhood education before starting school (Jacques, 2008; Maundeni & Lopez, 2005; Montsi, Monthe & Masale, 2001). Lack of timely intervention is apparent in South Africa’s poor schooling outcomes and low skills base (Dawes, Biersteker &

Hendricks, 2012). To address these concerns, both the Children's Act (RSA, 2005) and the National Integrated Plan aim to prioritise funding of programmes in communities "where families lack the means of providing proper shelter, food and other basic necessities of life to their children", and for children with disabilities. Children with moderate to severe disabilities have limited access, even though policy prioritises them for ECD services. An estimated 4% of children fall into this category; but in 2000, only 1% of the enrolment in ECD centres was by children with disabilities (including specialist services). For example, a 2010 study of over 1,500 ECD centres in the Western Cape suggests that enrolment of children with disabilities remains low even though early identification and intervention are essential to assist children with disabilities overcome barriers to learning. ECD centres in the high income areas spend on average two and a half times as much per child as those in the low income areas because they are able to raise fees better (Department of Basic Education, 2011). It is clear that not all young children are able to access early childhood education. This is problematic since all children ought to receive a sound literacy development from well-grounded early childhood education (Maudeni, 2013), which is still inaccessible to the majority of South African children.

Therefore, in order to improve the provision of ECD facilities in poor communities, the Department of Social Development offers a subsidy to ECD centres serving children from poor families. By offering such a subsidy, the Department of Social Development aims to improve the quality of ECD facilities and, where it is available, provide a major source of funding for registered non-profit centres in the poor communities. The Department of Social Development subsidy also extends to registered ECD centres as they receive a subsidy per child. However, most ECD centres are reported to be not registered so they lose out on the subsidy. Although 59% of children in registered centres received a subsidy, only 18% of all poor children under 5 years of age were subsidised in 2011. Some children were not subsidised because they were not attending ECD centres since their parents could not afford to pay fees in centres where payment of fees was required. It was found that some ECD centres that were subsidised also charged

fees as they claimed that the subsidies were insufficient to sustain their operation costs (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015). For example, a study conducted in the Western Cape found that fees were highly related to quality – more so than the presence of trained practitioners (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015). The same study found that ECD centres in areas where children are most deprived of better facilities have poorer infrastructure, management and educational programmes. With no mandatory public budget for infrastructure and start-up costs, there may not even be ECD centres in very poor communities. Children most in need of ECD facilities are therefore not receiving the level of care and stimulation needed to offset the deprivation they experience at home and in the community (DBE, 2011).

Research suggests that attendance at ECD centres or preschool has a positive impact on performance in reading and mathematics in school. For this reason, the National Development Plan proposes at least two years of preschool education (Atmore, van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2012). Studies show that children who have received quality care and early educational opportunities perform better academically compared to those who have not had similar exposure. The children who are exposed to early childhood education are likely to possess the pre-requisite skills of learning and they may also adapt faster to the first grade classes (Taiwo & Tyolo, 2002). The benefits of pre-school education are likely to shape the society due to the fact that a child is a resource of the future (Dunne, Leach, Chilisa, Maundeni, Tabulawa, Kutor, Forde & Asamoah, 2005). It has also been noted that inadequate attention to early childhood education is not only apparent in relation to programmes but it also prevails in research (Maundeni, 2013). The children who are left out in the ECD programmes are also likely to face problems when they start formal schooling, if their mother tongue is not the one offered in the school. Different views on language and schooling are presented in the following section.

2.8 Language in Education Policy (LiEP)

Under the Apartheid government, language in education has always been a controversial issue in South Africa, as the indigenous languages were not recognised as official languages. The Apartheid government had a belittling stance towards the African languages, a “position of benign neglect was adopted, one which reinforced the complete marginality of these languages in South African political, economic and even cultural life” (Alexander, 2010: 11). There is a relationship between identity and language learning (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007), hence Afrikaans and English were accorded a high status as languages of knowledge, politics, economics, and social mobility. Documented evidence of tension emanating from language policy is the 1976 Soweto uprising in which black students boycotted school because the Apartheid government was enforcing Afrikaans as the medium of instruction among black students. What started as a peaceful march by a group of students in Soweto escalated into a nationwide boycott of classes which turned violent, resulting in a number of students being shot dead or detained by the South African Security Forces.

Therefore, with the aim of addressing the language concerns language and equality, the South African government now recognises 11 official languages (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996) (RSA, 1996); namely: Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho (Sepedi), Swati, Tswana, Xhosa, Tsonga, Venda and Zulu. However, the African languages can be referred to with or without the class prefix such as Setswana or Tswana; isiZulu or Zulu, Tshivenda or Venda; Xitsonga or Tsonga. The complex multilingual nature of the South African social structure extends to educational institutions. Some local scholars, Makalela (2015) and the most recent PrePIRLS report (Howie et al., 2017) deserve mention for their contribution to the field of language-in-education as they point out the relationship between learner performance and language. In order to address the language problem in schools, the South African government has formulated the national Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 14 July 1997 (Department of Education, 1997). The LiEP stipulates that learners in the Foundation Phase should be taught in their mother tongue and a First Additional

Language (FAL) should be introduced six months into Grade 1 as a subject of language use, but not as medium of teaching (DoE, 2008). The language that the children know best when they first enter school is recommended as the language of learning and teaching (Alexander, 2009). This language is considered to be the most direct means through which children think, formulate ideas and give meaning to emotions (Alexander, 2002). In terms of Section 6(2) of the South Africa Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996, the School Governing Body (SGB¹⁰) may determine the language policy of the school. The language policy is drafted in accordance within the provisions of the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996; the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996 (SASA); the National Education Policy Act, Act 27 of 1996; applicable provincial legislation on school education; judgements of the South African courts; the International Convention on the Rights of the Child; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children; the Norms and Standards for Language Policy in Public Schools, 1997 and the guidelines of the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB). PanSALB is a board established in 1996, under the provisions of Chapter 1 of the South African Constitution and mandated to promote and ensure “respect for all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa” (Thamm, 2016).

In summary, the aim of the Language in Education Policy LiEP (1997) is to redress the “tensions, contradictions and sensitivities, underpinned by racial and linguistic discrimination” (DoE, 1997) of the apartheid past. Its goal is to ensure that all individuals and students in South Africa are treated equally irrespective of their language or race. The policy’s aim is to promote “communication across the barriers of colour, language and region, while at the same time creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one’s own would be encouraged” (ibid. par. A.4). Insights drawn from the LiEP are that every student has a right of choice of language of instruction located within the 11 official South African languages. The LiEP is therefore meant to address the problem of language

¹⁰ A body made up of the principal, one educator and parents of the children attending the school. The body makes decisions on the affairs of the school such as finance and expenditure, employment of educators, school policies and discipline.

as medium of instruction and language as subject in the school curriculum. There is also provision in the LiEP for parents to exercise their right to choose the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) through which they want their children to be taught (Department of Education, 1997). In light of this, I will take a closer look at three issues stemming from the LiEP: the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), bi/multilingual education and lastly, the Mother Tongue-English debate.

2.8.1 Language of learning and teaching (LoLT)

As mentioned in Section 2.8., the school governing body plays a major role in deciding a school's language of learning and teaching (LoLT). In school, the LoLT is the medium of communication for the transmission of knowledge. This is different from the teaching of language itself, where grammar, vocabulary, and the written and the oral forms of a language constitute a specific curriculum for the acquisition of second language other than the L1 (Ball, 2011). In primary school, the majority of learners are supposed to do their first 3 years of schooling (Foundation Phase) in their first or home language (L1) as language of learning and teaching (LoLT). Besides English and Afrikaans, the nine African languages serve as LoLT in the Foundation Phase. In schools where Afrikaans or any of the nine African languages are offered as home language (L1), English is introduced as a First Additional Language (FAL) (L2) in Grade 1.

Therefore, the highly contested issue of language proficiency is recognised as critical for effective teaching and learning. Language proficiency is measured by those who hold the socioeconomic, political, educational, and cultural power in a community and society (Webb, Lafon & Pare, 2010; Bamgbose, 2000; Cummins, 1996). Cummins (1996: 51–2) provides two overriding misunderstandings with regard to language proficiency: the child's ability to use the standard form of a language affects the child's ability to think logically; and the child's mastery of the spoken aspect of the language as spoken skill equals native-like control of the language. As Cummins (1996: 52) states, "Conversational skills are interpreted as a valid index of overall proficiency in the language." Research has also shown that even young children entering school for the first time bring a form of a language

to school as Heugh (2005: 77) observes, “Children come into a school proficient in at least one and often several languages used in the immediate community. They have learnt to use these languages for effective communication in mainly informal contexts.” Therefore, their language ability or language repertoire is dependent on the informal context of the usage and that it is predominantly oral, which is akin to Cummins’ (2008) concept of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). BICS are informal, communication-oriented and cognitively less demanding skills in the teaching and learning process, whereas academic language proficiency (CALP), which is a formal academic skill, takes much longer to develop. A student with CALP has the ability to think critically and independently, a key prerequisite for academic success. Cummins (2008) cautions against using the second language for learning and teaching, when the student shows only a rudimentary ability in BICS. Cummins explains how CALP can be supported and encouraged through the teaching-learning process. He says that CALP can only be developed if the student is constantly challenged cognitively while still receiving support (Wood, 1998) to complete the necessary tasks. The educator’s teaching philosophy greatly influences whether the student will achieve adequate CALP and BICS proficiency in the target language. The educator, who ignores or devalues the student’s prior knowledge and experiences, which in many cases is constructed in the non-standard variety of the language, is limiting that student’s cognitive development. As Cummins (1996: 60) points out, it is crucial to acknowledge the student’s prior experiences “in making academic input in the target language comprehensible”. However, in the formal schooling environment, he says that it is expected that: the school will develop home language; that the student will develop critical thinking skills by engaging with a challenging curriculum; and that language forms the foundation of the student’s cognitive and academic development (Cummins, 2008). However, just as Cummins (1996) has cautioned against the perception of the students’ learning ability as soon as basic communicative skills are acquired in the target language. As Wood (1998: 42) points out, students’ learning abilities are often misinterpreted because “learning in school is different from learning on the streets as it serves different purposes and is embedded in different activities and practices” (please refer to the discussion on primary and secondary Discourses

(Gee, 2012; in Chapter 3 for further elaboration). With regard to showing adequate basic interpersonal skills, it is possible that the student can possess the ability to transfer the 'street learning' skills to 'school learning', and it is assumed that the student has the necessary skills to succeed academically.

The Language in Education Policy (LiEP, 1997) gives learners the right to learn in the language of their choice, and school governing bodies have the power to determine the language policy of a school. The underlying principle in LiEP is to maintain the use of the home language as the LoLT, especially in the foundation phase, while incrementally providing access to additional language(s). This principle is based on the assumption that many South African children are bilingual or multilingual (da Rocha, 2010). In many schools, however, the learner population speaks a wide range of home languages, making it difficult to implement the policy as intended (NEEDU, 2013). According to Canagarajah (2011), multilingual speakers shuttle between different spaces of self when they articulate thoughts in different languages.

With the introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), English was introduced as a First Additional Language (FAL) from Grade 1, to strengthen learners' proficiency in English, which after Grade 3 is the language of teaching and testing in most schools. To ensure that African languages are not neglected, the DBE has recently published a draft policy, *Incremental Introduction of African Languages: Draft Policy: September 2013*, signalling its intention to make the inclusion of at least one African language in the foundation phase compulsory from 2015 (NEEDU, 2013). However, when deciding on the LoLT, the SGB has to recognise the cultural diversity of its learners. It must endeavour to promote bi/multilingualism and respect for all languages used in this country. Exposing learners to two languages in school leads to bi/multilingual education which is discussed in the next section.

2.9 Theories and approaches in bi/multilingual education

Bilingual and multilingual education refers to the use of two or more languages of instruction in school (Ball, 2011). For Baker (2001), a bilingual person is someone who is proficiently skilled in using two languages. In the South African context, bilingualism for the majority of black learners has been interpreted as Home Language (mother tongue) plus English or Afrikaans. In this context, it is presumed that a student has a defined mother tongue and at least a second language wherein the student is communicatively competent when starting school (DoE, 1997: 4; Braam, 2004). This, however, does not exclude the possibility of the student being monolingual when starting school. Therefore, the dilemma facing inner city children in multicultural areas such as Johannesburg and its townships is that they are exposed to too many different languages at an early age. Because of multilingualism in townships (please refer to Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion) many children become “inadequate bilinguals” (Dunn, 1987: 49) who are incompetent in both what could be considered their home language and the school’s language of instruction. Because of mixing of languages in the townships, most children’s home language is not well-developed. Although quite dated, Dunn (1987) draws attention to similar occurrences regarding inner city Latino/Latina children and adults who speak ‘inferior Spanish’.

It can then be argued that language proficiency or the lack of language proficiency cannot be attributed only to the student’s inability to master the target language but can be traced to deeper social factors (Heugh, 2005). Both Cummins (1996) and Heugh (2005) allude to the role that educators and schools play in how proficiently students acquire language, especially English (a high status language). They advocate that a strong “conceptual foundation” is necessary in the student’s first language (mother tongue/home language) in order for him or her to gain maximum benefit from a bilingual programme. It is, therefore, not only the students who should be language ready when starting school, but also the educators. Language readiness, however, is a loaded term. In South Africa, educators need to know how African L1 children (or any other mother tongue child) who bring a different “highly developed language” from that of the educator

to school, one that is often as good as invisible, fare with literacy learning in a language they do not know well (Bloch, 2000: 4). Cummins, (1996: 64–65) adds,

Lack of English fluency may be a secondary contributor to children’s academic difficulty but the fundamental causal factors of both success and failure lie in what is communicated to children by their interactions with educators [...] Underachievement is not caused primarily by lack of fluency in English. Underachievement is the result of particular kinds of interactions in school that lead culturally diverse students to mentally withdraw from academic effort because they are not encouraged and stimulated enough at school.

According to Ball (2011: 15), research on mother tongue-based bilingual/multilingual education in early childhood and the transition to primary education is scarce. South Africa is not the only multilingual country in the southern African region nor are its language-in-education policies uniquely problematic (Nkosana, 2011; Mooko, 2009; Wolfaardt, 2010). Like many other African countries, there is need to use English due to its colonial history and a current capitalist economic system (Evans, 2014). In many African countries it is highly desirable for children to possess high levels of proficiency in English as “the distributor of power” (Nkosana, 2011: 11). In Botswana for example, Setswana and English are the official languages with Setswana used for instruction from Grades 1 to 4. However, since 2002 the Botswana policy has changed to make English the language of instruction from Grade 4 and there is “absolute silence on the role of other languages in building national unity” (Mooko, 2009: 27). In Namibia, English is used from the start of schooling, despite a call for a transitional bilingual programme that would see early literacy established in several mother tongue languages. This is the case despite the fact that learners in the rural areas have very little exposure to English, resulting in serious delays in reading for understanding (Wolfaardt, 2005). Benson (2004) attributes such persistent patterns in misguided language policy to the fact that policy makers tend to hold a monolingual view of the world, or a monolingual habitus (Gogolin, 2002). Such a habitus fails to recognize “multilingualism as a social and individual reality that requires appropriate designed approaches” (Benson & Kosonen, 2013: 284). Gogolin (2002) argues for a multilingual habitus that acknowledges rather than ignores the resources that learners’ proficiency in non-dominant languages bring to the classroom.

In order to achieve multilingualism, different theories on first and second language acquisition in childhood have been proposed by scholars in developmental psychology, linguistics, and early childhood education (UNESCO, 2001). Research suggests that young children's ability to learn languages and their emerging reading and writing skills are affected by their social environments, including the language(s) to which they are exposed, and the language socialisation of their caregivers (Pesco & Crago, 2008), and language instruction. As mentioned earlier, in South African townships, many children are exposed to more than one language and they acquire two or more primary languages simultaneously. Research has shown that children from bi/multilingual environments are often exposed to various languages spoken by non-native speakers of those languages that bring into their speech certain accents and different ways of pronunciation (Fernald, Perfors & Marchman, 2006).

Some children start as monolingual, and begin to acquire other languages sometime in early childhood, for example, in an early childhood programmes or learning institutions or through other interactions outside the home, such as friends or peers during play (Ball, 2011). The claim that younger children are better language students than older children is refuted by Cummins (1996) when he outlines the long-term benefits of additive bilingual education wherein the L1 is used to support the L2 when it is used as a LoLT. Cummins (1996) points out that, "bilingual children exhibit a greater sensitivity to linguistic meanings and may be more flexible in their thinking than monolingual children". He further notes that if bilingual education is correctly implemented, bilingual children can attain high levels of fluency and literacy in two languages, and bilingual children's "explicit knowledge about the structure and functions of language itself" seems greater than that of monolinguals (Cummins, 1996: 103–6). According to Cummins (1996), Baker (2001), Rubio (2007), Skutnabb-Kangas (2009) and other advocates of bilingual education, an additive bilingual approach is one in which a second language is added to the students' store of languages without any loss of competence in the first language. This is also what the LiEP supports when it states:

Whichever route is followed, the underlying principle is to maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s). Hence, the Department's position that an additive approach to bilingualism is to be seen as the normal orientation of our language-in-education policy (DoE, 1997: 4).

In this approach, both languages (i.e. the home language and the additional language) are supposed to be supported, developed and validated to the full in and outside of school. Heugh (2005) advocates an additive bilingual programme wherein the mother tongue serves as the primary medium of instruction for at least the first eight years of schooling, and thereafter an additional language is introduced as a medium of instruction, preferably in a dual medium programme. The ideal model, however, is a mother tongue education system throughout the student's education. In this study it is shown that mother tongue instruction is provided in the first three years of schooling. In the following sections I present an overview of theory and research on first and second language acquisition in childhood.

2.9.1 Additive bilingualism

Underpinning the current South African Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) document is the language education paradigm called 'additive bilingualism' (Welch, 2012). Within this language in education paradigm emphasis is placed on literacy in mother tongue and the use of mother-tongue medium for as long as possible, with the addition of at least one other language which would complement rather than replace the mother tongue. For example, in a multilingual South African context the language management programmes are meant to ensure that "English and other languages in South Africa play a facilitative role and not a displacive role" (Banda, 2000: 58). The LiEP recognises the importance of the use of mother tongue for learning for at least the first six grades as an essential step in ensuring the development of literacy and numeracy. Provision is made in LiEP for a variety of additive bilingual models and language maintenance programmes. In an additive bilingual model the additional language as medium of instruction does not replace the mother tongue (Heugh 2005). Wolff (2005) argues that a language policy that favours the mother tongue greatly promotes students'

proficiency in both languages and improves their chances of academic and cognitive success. However, Lightbown (2008), warns that becoming completely fluent in a second language is not as easy as many researchers have claimed, but it rather takes several years. Thus, the UNESCO (2015) report points out that it is a mistake to assume that exposing children to day care or preschool programmes in a second language is sufficient to prepare them for academic success in that language. Although children who have this exposure may be better prepared for school, they will need ongoing support to acquire sufficient proficiency in the second language (L2). Furthermore, in order to succeed in academic subjects, they will need to continue to develop their first language (L1). Nicholas and Lightbown (2008) point out that the pace of learning an additional language, and the effective instruction or support for children to learn an additional language, will depend upon whether the child has developed literacy in the L1. In this case, literacy entails the development of metalinguistic awareness, including the knowledge that the pronunciation of words is related to the written form (for most languages), and that there are 'right' and 'wrong' ways to say things (August & Shanahan, 2006). Tarone (2016) has noted that in most cases populations without first language literacy have been overlooked in second language acquisition research literature, including very young children as well as illiterate older children and adults. These clarifications indicate the complexities of bi/multilingual learning and instruction in South African township schools where children speak a concoction of languages not recognised as standard mother tongue in the school context. Extensive research has been conducted on bilingual education. For example, Anderson, Friedrich and Kim (2011) documented the implementation of a bilingual family literacy programme called *Parents as Literacy Supporters in Immigrant Communities* over two years in five communities in a culturally and socially diverse metropolitan area of Canada. Hanon (2003: 100) has described these family literacy programmes as “programmes to teach literacy knowledge and make use of learners” family relationships and engagement in family literacy practices.

2.9.2 *Subtractive bilingualism*

In contrast to an additive bilingual approach is the subtractive approach also known as submersion. Submersion describes education for language minority children who are placed in mainstream schools. Baker (2011) metaphorically refers to language minority students as 'non-swimmers' who are thrown into water and are expected to learn to swim as quickly as possible without the help of special swimming lessons; with the metaphor of the swimming pool being the majority language and not the home language of the child. The language minority students are taught in the majority language and both teachers and students are expected to use exclusively the majority language in the classroom. In subtractive or submersion education, the second language is a medium of instruction (Baker, 2001; de Mejía, 2002). Mainstreaming is aimed at assimilation of language minority speakers, particularly in the countries where there has been immigration (e.g. the USA, the UK) (Hurajová, 2015). In submersion education the majority language is the medium and the aim of education is monolingualism, not bilingualism (Baker, 2011). As Baker (2011) further points out, "mainstream education rarely produces functionally bilingual children"; the typical outcome for the language majority would be only a limited knowledge of a foreign language. Submersion or mainstream education is often associated with subtractive bilingualism, where a minority language speaker has to 'sink or swim' at school without any institutional support (de Mejía, 2002). The long term effect of subtractive bilingualism is that the students eventually regress in both languages, and even worse, will lose his or her home language's cognitive/academic proficiency skills (Cummins, 2008; Baker, 2001). A subtractive approach to learning through an additional language especially from Grade 1 or as early as the pre-primary class, devalues the students' mother tongue and in the process creates a barrier whereby proficiency in, especially, literacy cannot be achieved.

The subtractive bilingual model is based on the principle of replacing the students' first language as a language of learning and teaching with the target language. Cummins (2008) asserts that students are able to perform maximally where an additional language is the LoLT, provided the first language of the student is

maintained and developed alongside the additional language. He goes further by saying that the academic competence of the student depends on achieving cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in the first language. When the student is immersed in a straight-for-target language programme, the CALP is underdeveloped and the transfer of cognitive skills from the first language to the additional language leads to under-performance. This could be the case at Kutlwano Primary School where this study was conducted, as will be illustrated in the discussion of data. The direct consequence of this is that the student's language proficiency, in a sense, does not develop beyond the basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) level. There are a number of subtractive language models (early exit from Grade 3; late exit from Grade 5 or 6; or straight-for-the-target language from Grade 1), all with different implementation strategies. The common characteristic of subtractive bilingual models or approaches, however, is the eventual replacement of the mother tongue of the student with the target language. Heugh (2005: 65–66) says that research, both local and international, clearly “shows policy makers that subtractive (straight for L2) and early transition programmes do not facilitate successful results”. It means that early immersion in a second language (L2) or an international language of wider communication (ILWC) is detrimental to the cognitive growth of the student (Heugh, 2005) and literacy competence. The medium of instruction is supposed to be the home language of the majority of the students. Mother tongue in a subtractive model is initially used as a medium of instruction but is soon replaced with the target language, which, in the South African context, is predominantly English (Alexander, 2000). At Kutlwano Primary School the home languages are Setswana, IsiXhosa and IsiZulu (Foundation Phase) and English (Intersen Phase)¹¹. However, not all educators and parents support Mother tongue learning. The Mother Tongue-English debate is presented in the following section.

¹¹ **Intersen** is a combination of **INTER**mediate and **SENI**or Phases where Intermediate is Grade 4-6 and Senior is Grade 7.

2.10 Mother tongue versus English debate

The mother tongue or home language is defined as “a child’s principal language (or one of his/her principal languages) at the time of his/her first contact with the official education system, i.e., at the age of four or five.”¹² Mother tongue or mother language refers to a child’s first language, the language learned in the home from older family members (UNESCO, 2003: 15). However, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000: 111) finds this definition problematic in multilingual contexts as:

[...] parents and children may not have the same mother tongue ... [in] situations where the mother tongue by origin may not be learned in infancy and may not be taught by the primary care-takers [...]

While it is of course possible to question the notion of the mother tongue or principal language, or of the native speaker, as some researchers have done, a child or learner-centred schooling system cannot get away from seeking to establish the young child’s best-known language(s), the one (or more) she or he feels most comfortable with, and that is most likely to enable successful literacy development and learning at school. For example, although dated, Malherbe (1969: 45) noted that in South Africa it was possible for white infants to learn the native language of their isiZulu-speaking nannies (primary care-givers who are not their mothers) before they learn either English or Afrikaans which are mother languages of most white people in South Africa. It is, therefore, difficult to define the mother tongue. Mbah (2012: 50) notes that:

The mother tongue is the first language acquired by the child. It may coincide but not necessarily the language of the mother of the child. If the first language of the child happens to be the language of the mother or father or both, it is the mother tongue. However, in mixed marriages, which are becoming common in metropolitan (areas), the child may pick the language of the mother or father. In this instance, whichever it picks is regarded as the mother tongue [...] the language he eventually picks up is still the mother tongue. In other words, the term mother tongue has acquired a technical meaning quite removed from the literal meaning.

It is possible to consider the mother tongue as the language one knows best; is most comfortable using; and which forms the basis of one’s identity (da Rocha, 2010). This definition is also in line with Mbah’s (2012: 22) view that mother

¹² As cited in Alexander (2006: 4), this definition has been adopted by the Council of Europe, who in turn have taken it from the work of Ayo Bamgbose

tongue should in certain contexts be taken to mean “the language of the immediate community” or any other language with which the learner is very familiar. According to Mbah (2012), the term, “the language of the immediate community”, confuses some people as the language of the immediate community exists in communities where there are other languages recognised and spoken by the communities outside their mother tongue. Further, the Council of Europe (CoE) seems to accept the definition of mother tongue as referring to “a child’s principal language (or one of his/her principal languages) at the time of his/her first contact with the official education system, i.e., at the age of 4 or 5” (Alexander, 2006: 4). The Department of Education policy (1997) states that mother tongue should refer to the language that a learner has acquired in his/her early years and which has normally become his/her natural instrument of thought and communication. This definition of the mother tongue focuses on the early years of a learner which I find appropriate to my study as it includes learners in the Foundation Phase. For this reason, I find the DoE’s definition of the mother tongue much more functional to the context of my study.

In South Africa, the concept of mother tongue is a politicised and controversial matter, because of South Africa’s racially oppressive past that devalued the mother tongues of the indigenous people. During the Apartheid era, mother-tongue education was legitimated in terms of the then position of the UNESCO which stated:

It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his (sic) mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium. But [...] it is not always possible to use the mother tongue in school and, even when possible, some factors may impede or condition its use (UNESCO, 1953: 11).

The UNESCO report of 1953 concerning mother tongue and the language of learning and teaching focuses attention on the fundamental importance of the mother tongue as the LoLT. Since 1953, UNESCO has encouraged mother tongue instruction in early childhood and primary education (UNESCO, 1953) yet

monolingualism in official dominant languages is still the norm around the world (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani & Merali, 2006). The report recommends “the use of the mother tongue be extended to as late a stage in education as possible. In particular, students should begin their schooling through the medium of the mother tongue, because they understand it best and because to begin their school life in the mother tongue will make the break between home and the school as small as possible” (UNESCO, 1953: 47–8 in Bamgbose, 2000: 76).

Extensive research world-wide supports the view that education in the mother-tongue, or at least in a language with which the children are adequately familiar when they begin schooling, is much superior to education provided in a language which is not used in the homes and which learners first experience as a sustained medium of communication on their first school day (Cummins, 2000; Heugh, 2005). Examples produced by UNESCO (2008) attests to the resurgence of international interest in promoting mother-tongue-based education, and to the wide variety of models, tools, and resources now being developed and tested to promote learning programmes in the mother tongue (Ball, 2011). However, most examples focus on the primary school level while overlooking the family’s role as a child’s first teacher in learning their first, and often more than one primary language, or the role of early childhood educators in supporting mother tongue development or bi/multilingual learning in programmes that serve very young, linguistically diverse populations (Ball, 2011). It is believed that when offered the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue, children are likely to succeed in school (Kosonen, 2005) and their parents are likely to communicate with educators and participate in their children’s learning (Benson, 2002; 2009). Research has found that mother tongue based education benefits disadvantaged groups, including children from poorly resourced schools in townships and rural communities (Hovens, 2002). Cummins (2001) has shown that bilingual children perform better in school when the school effectively teaches the children’s home language and, where appropriate, develops literacy in that language. It is believed that a child learning in and through the mother tongue is more likely to succeed academically than a child whose language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is not

the mother tongue. Also, when a child's LoLT is not the mother tongue, the cognitive skills necessary for learning in or through a second language are either poorly developed or not developed when there is no sustainable and active maintenance of the mother tongue or first language (Ellis, 2008). The transfer of knowledge and skills from the mother tongue to the additional (target) language is therefore inadequate for academic success (Cummins 2000).

The central advantage to using the mother tongue as the language of learning and teaching has been seen as the ability to understand and make meaning across the curriculum, as well as the improved ability to learn a second language. In addition, Brock-Utne (2007: 19) argues that a strong literacy foundation in the mother tongue leads to a less stressful transfer of cognitive academic skills, even when learning in a language other than the mother tongue in the higher grades. Added support for the transfer of knowledge and skills (from mother tongue to the additional languages) comes from Heugh (2005: 79) who gives a more detailed definition of transfer. Heugh (2005: 79) describes transfer as having its roots in the work of Cummins (1984). According to Heugh (2005: 79) in order to transfer knowledge and skills from mother tongue to the additional languages, the learner student must have the first language knowledge, especially knowledge of the process skills of reading and writing, before the transfer of these cognitive processes to the second language is made possible. It must be noted that transfer from the L1 to the L2 is not possible until the L1 is sufficiently well mastered and the L2 is sufficiently well known (Wright, 2015). Jim Cummins (1984) and other psycholinguists believe that transfer is only possible once there is a firm foundation of academic and cognitive development in the L1. Transfer is made possible in additive bilingual programmes because the L1 is kept present as the primary medium and language from which the knowledge and skills can be transferred (Heugh 2005: 79). The argument for successful transfer rests on the premise that the student has a strong foundation in the mother tongue. In other words, a high level of mother tongue language and literacy proficiency must be maintained and constantly stimulated while learning in the additional language. It implies that if there is not enough linguistic input from the home environment,

exposure to the second language can have a detrimental effect on the literacy development of both languages of the student (Romaine, 2000). It can be noted that the promotion of mother-tongue education is further hindered by factors such as being unaware of the advantages pertaining to such education as well as difficulties and complexities with the practical implementation of mother-tongue education in linguistically diverse communities (Stoop, 2017). Moreover, the literacy and school performance of learners are severely hampered due to the lack of mother-tongue education in schools. It is believed that mother-tongue education promotes and improves literacy and good school performance.

In South Africa, models of bilingual education are all based on mother-tongue education, preferably as soon as a child enters school (Banda, 2000). Following government's language in education policy (LiEP) of additive bilingualism, several models of bilingual education have been proposed for South Africa (Alexander, 2010; Heugh, 2005; Lafon & Webb, 2008). Banda (2000: 61) questions the relevance of studies done elsewhere to support arguments for mother-tongue education in South Africa. For example, Cummins (1981) is widely cited in support of mother tongue education. Even government's postulations on additive bilingualism appear to be anchored in Cummins (1981). Banda (2000: 61) questions the applicability of Cummins' (1981) studies to the South African context, considering that South Africa has multiple mother tongues. On the contrary, "The Canadian situation under which Cummins' additive bilingualism evolved only had French and English to contend with" (Banda, 2000: 61) whereas in a typical South African classroom one can find 50 learners who have 12 different mother tongues between them, especially in Gauteng (Noxy, 2013). The first critical mistake people make is to talk about all South African schools as if they are in the same situation, when they are clearly not (Noxy, 2013). Setati and Adler (2000) very importantly point out the difference between schools in rural areas, which have relatively homogenous language settings, and urban schools with their diverse and very fluid langscapes. Langscape is a word used by linguists to refer to the linguistic make up of a particular community, environment or place and purpose of language practice. For learners in township schools, English is still a

second language to them and the pedagogy in classroom needs to be structured to address the multilingual nature of the school (Noxy, 2013).

In most rural schools both the learners and educators share a mother tongue. However, literacy development is low because non-academic texts are unavailable due to resource shortages and a lack of literacy practice in the home. The parents' own literacy levels are also poor and a culture of reading is absent in the homes. Spoken language is almost exclusively the mother tongue, including the choice of radio, TV stations, and music they listen to. The school is the only environment in which the child is exposed to the second language, and although the school's official policy might be 'English' as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), this is not what happens in the classroom. It therefore does not make sense for educators, who themselves are not confident in English, to talk to learners, with whom they share a first language, in a second language. In such environments, Setati and Adler (2000) quite rightly term English a 'foreign language', as opposed to a second language. It is almost as foreign as French or Portuguese to most South Africans, and the opportunities to use English for any purposeful activity is very rare.

In as far as the additive bilingualism argument is concerned, Hoadley (2012: 189) cites the Threshold Project, early research done in South Africa in the 1990s, which showed that many black learners had difficulty adjusting to the switch from mother-tongue education to English-medium of instruction in Standard 3 (Grade 5). According to Hoadley (2012: 189), the research revealed that learners could not transfer knowledge acquired in the L1 to English; at the same time they could not transfer what they had learnt in English to the first language. Drawing on Cummins' (1981) distinction between basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), this failure by pupils to transfer acquired knowledge can be attributed to failure to achieve CALP in either language. However, it is proposed that learners should use their mother tongue until they reach CALP and can operate in CALP in their first language should they begin to operate in a second language at

cognitively-demanding levels (Lockett, 1995: 76). Clearly, the problem does not seem to have much to do with the medium of instruction, as with classroom practice. The research seems to suggest that both English and the mother tongues suffered from poor classroom practice which led to inadequate acquisition of both English and the mother tongues. Many South African educators are not mother tongue English speakers and struggle with English themselves. Questions can be posed on how these educators can explain concepts clearly when they lack cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) themselves (Cummins, 2003). This is not an indictment on them, but rather a simple fact of training and teacher education (Noxy, 2013) (discussed further in Chapter 6). There is also the question of the pedagogical implication of using the CALP argument in the South African context to support the medium of instruction in mainly one language –the mother tongue. According to Cummins (1981: 24), it requires 5–7 years for a child to achieve CALP that enables him perform well on academic skills. This might be taken to mean that a child should be introduced to English earlier rather than later (Lemmer, 2002).

On the other hand, many South African children start formal schooling with limited academic language proficiency having not achieved BICS even in their mother tongue by the time they enter school. This is due to many factors, including, but not limited to little or no reading in the home, the limited vocabulary they are exposed to due to socioeconomic factors, and parents and guardians often work very long hours to spend time with their children. They are also unable to dedicate time reading stories, to their children that middle class parents reportedly do (Noxy, 2013). Reading is only first introduced to the children at school in Grade 1, by which point the children are 7 years old. The correlation between English and class here becomes clear: English speakers are often also middle class income earners, with the literacy and language practices of middle class families. Shirley Brice Heath (1983) did some extraordinary research on what class means for acquiring the language practices that work well in schools-middle class families: how they talk to their children, how they play with their children and how they read to their children, apprentice their children into the language practices that

are replicated in the schooling system. It is not surprising then, that children coming to school and only meeting text for the first time then are way behind their counterparts who have had far richer language experiences at home. In this situation then, the school has to be the location where deep language practices are acquired. This is where Cummins (1981) Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) comes in. CUP appears to support early mother-tongue education in that it assumes that efficiency in the mother-tongue transfers to the L2. Cummins' (1981) research is seminal in that it underlines extensive vocabulary and knowledge of complex grammatical structures in the first language as always predictor to better second language acquisition. In the context of rural South African schools, where children are not brought up truly bilingual from infancy, this idea is very important, because it affects the decision on when learners can or should transition from their mother tongue as the way they learn at school to a second language (Noxy, 2013). In South Africa, many children speak a home language that differs from the language of instruction in education programmes. Ironically, despite the overwhelming evidence of multilingualism and government's additive bilingual policy, it is still assumed and expected that South Africans are typically monolingual using a 'Home Language' in their neighbourhoods (Lafon & Webb, 2008).

But if the Threshold Project research (Lockett, 1995) is anything to go by, there is need for improved mother-tongue education and EMOI education. Therefore, given the South African context, it makes more pedagogical sense to argue for improving both mother-tongue and English medium instruction education, than to use the CALP and CUP arguments for mother-tongue education. In fact, the concept of 'mother tongue' is increasingly becoming ambiguous and flawed considering rural-urban migration and the changing South African language landscape after the end of apartheid and legislated compartmentalisation of people according to race and language group (Webb, 2009; Slabbert & Finlayson, 2000). Regional language education is more appropriate. This implies that 'regional dialects', which are mother-tongues of the

majority of learners, should be used for classroom instruction (Lafon & Webb, 2008).

The issue of dialects in education should be addressed by drawing on lessons from sociolinguistics, beginning with the early works of Labov (1972), Baratz and Shuy (1969) who argued that dialect and reading dialects are not ill-informed or half-formed variations of standard language. Instead, educators should recognise each dialect as constituting a well-developed linguistic system with its own rules for variations from standard language. In other words, speakers of dialects express linguistic *differences*, not linguistic *defects* as mostly assumed by educators (Pearson & Stephens, 1994: 33) [Italics in original text]. It must be noted that when establishing sociolinguistic variation as an approach to investigating language was not Labov's intention but to demonstrate how language changes spread through society (Chambers & Trudgill 1998; Chambers, 2003). The goal of the school should, therefore not be to eradicate a particular dialect in the process of making each individual a speaker of standard language but instead it should accommodate the children's use of the dialect where they are learning to read and write (Pearson & Stephens, 1994: 33). For example, in America in the 1960s, several examples of black dialect appeared and, almost as rapidly, disappeared from major urban districts. These dialects failed because African American parents wanted their children to be exposed to mainstream materials that were used by other children. (Pearson & Stephens, 1994: 33). This implies that in terms of power relations, educators and policy makers have the power to annihilate some dialects and promote those they prefer or consider 'standard' dialects. The problem with standard dialects is that they change more slowly. The fact that a dialect is used in writing and public media puts something of a brake on a change (Gee & Hayes, 2011). Non-standard dialects and standard ones are often said to serve different purposes. The former signal identification with local, often non-mainstream community and the latter identifies with a wider, pluralistic and technological society and its views of who are elite and worth emulating (Chambers, 2003; Milroy & Milroy, 2012). Gee (2012) points out that it is often an accident of history as to which dialect gets to be taken to be the standard. It is often that people with

political and economic influence, whose dialect is embraced for business, social and educational purposes. Literature shows that the standardisation of the indigenous South African languages has a rural context. However, evidence from this study label these language forms as irrelevant not only to the vast urban population but to the current sociocultural linguistic context. Since languages evolve like culture, it is recommended that various stakeholders including, cultural organisations, academics and bodies like the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) should revise the standard forms of the indigenous languages to conform to prevailing linguistic realities.

Problems of mother tongue education date back to the Apartheid era, prior to South Africa's independence in 1994. The apartheid nationalist government embarked on a policy to preserve ethnic identities to the extent of attempting to create monolingual societies out of multilingual South Africa (Banda, 2000). Apart from separating people according to race and language group, the apartheid regime also insisted on mother-tongue education which was flawed for various reasons. First, although 11 official languages are recognised in South Africa, Second, literature shows that typically, a South African uses at least two languages depending on context. Blacks, particularly those in urban areas, have been known to use three or more languages (De Klerk, 2000; Slabbert & Finlayson, 2000). In most South African contexts, it is likely that the child's home language will be one or more local or regional dialect, sociolect or non-standard variety different from the written standard (Plüddemann, 2010: 6). In such contexts, a mother-tongue or home-language based schooling system has the task of using the child's principal language to mediate access to the standard variety and of adding the latter to the child's repertoire (Plüddemann, 2010: 6). Although with sinister motives, on the surface the Apartheid official language-medium policy was said to be in line with the most up-to-date international educational research and was approached by its proponents, Dr Eiselen and Dr Verwoerd, as a logical extension of the endeavour of the Afrikaner "nation" to other South African social groups in what

was conceptualised as a multi-national state. In short, the use of the “standard”¹³ indigenous varieties of the African languages was a cynical manoeuvre, supported disingenuously by means of “scholarly” evidence, to promote the “retribalisation” or ethnicisation of the African people (Alexander, 2010). In the process of “retribalisation” the Apartheid government ensued promotion of Afrikaans as an official language. However, there is still a strong “negative socio-political meaning of Afrikaans in many communities” (Webb, 2002), because of its apartheid legacy as the language of the oppressor and the dominance of English over the emergent official languages post 1996 (Alexander, 2000; Giliomee, 2003). These concerns are particularly evident in the field of education, with special reference to mother tongue education. On the contrary, Heugh (2000: 24–25) argues that the Bantu Education Act (Act 47 of 1953) inadvertently produced positive academic results, which the apartheid state did not anticipate: yet, the parents still felt that education based on the mother tongue was detrimental to their children’s social and academic opportunities (Webb, 2002: 10). Although “a child’s education is best begun in a language the child already has some competence in, preferably the mother tongue” (Bamgbose, 2000: 3), the educationally sound benefits of learning and teaching in the mother tongue were outweighed, in the post-apartheid era, by the racially inherited attitudes of the past.

Prevalent in South Africa are several conceptions and misconceptions about use of African languages. The misconceptions about the use of African languages can be traced back to the colonial mentality (Alexander, 2003). Alexander (2003) describes an attitude which is prevalent throughout the African continent, and which manifests itself as a sense of resignation about the perceived powerlessness of local or indigenous languages of Africa. Most people are willing to maintain their primary languages in family, community and religious contexts but they do not, in spite of the fact that most African people are proficient in two or more languages. Paradoxically, in South Africa, English, the dominant universal target language, is not usually one of these.

¹³ These standard forms often rejected by many users of the languages as being rural (Ansre, 1974).

In their report to the National Reading Panel, Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) concluded that first language maintenance enhances a child's success in learning to read in a second language indeed, Tabors and Snow (2001) caution that parents *should not* be encouraged to interact with their children in English until their first language is well developed. Cummins (2013) also argued that it is important for children to maintain their first language. He proposed the notion of *common underlying proficiency*; that is, although languages differ at the surface level, higher order analytic and cognitive skills – or *interlinguistic resources* – transfer across languages. Given that many children begin to lose their home language upon entry to school or preschool, Cummins has been a strong advocate of *additive bilingualism* – the concept that children can learn an additional language while still retaining their own. On the other hand, Wong-Fillmore (2000) describes the psychological and social consequences when immigrant and refugee children lose their first language while acquiring English (or the dominant language of their community) and are unable to communicate effectively with their parents and grandparents who have not had the opportunity to learn the dominant language.

In terms of the current language of instruction policy, learners are expected to make a switch to English (or to a lesser extent Afrikaans) as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in Grade 4. In this regard Madiba (2013) argues that it is clear that this policy direction is foregrounding English as the 'main' language of South Africans. Numerous issues then arise from this position – not least of which being the possibility of subtractive bilingualism in which learners emerge with English skills at the expense of their mother tongue (L1). Although the issue of language and academic achievement has been the subject of much discussion and research in South Africa (Alexander, 2003; Heugh, 2011; Madiba, 2010a, 2010b; Webb, Lepota & Ramogosi, 2004), the potential role of indigenous African languages as *linguae academia* (academic languages) has not yet been adequately appraised or appreciated. Accordingly, parents, teachers, government and scholars have different perspectives on the use of these languages for academic purpose. Although African languages have been accorded official status, English is

still highly regarded by most black parents (Stein & Mamabolo, 2005; De Klerk, 2000, 2002). Most parents, for example, do not see the teaching of African languages at school as having value for their children as they believe they have been fully mastered at home (Stein & Mamabolo, 2005). According to Kamwangamula (2000) the majority of South African parents aspire to have their children educated in English, because they believe it is the language of empowerment. Globally, English has emerged as the default language for business around the world (Michaud, 2012).

It is interesting to note that academics (backed by research albeit mostly done outside South Africa) appear unanimous that there should be mother-tongue education throughout schooling. For some years, educationists have proposed that African language learners should be taught in their mother tongue for at least the first three years of school before switching over to English. Speaking at a Language Policy conference at the end of 2006, the former Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, indicated that this initial period of mother-tongue instruction would be extended to six years, that is, both the Foundation Phase (Grades 1 to 3) and the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 6). Despite the proposed policy on mother tongue instruction, recent studies have shown that black parents and increasingly coloured parents (Afrikaans L1 speakers) prefer English medium of instruction for their children (Plüddemann, 2010). The main issue here is whether those who prefer English medium of instruction should be forced to have mother-tongue education; or indeed whether learners and their parents have the right to choose, or can make an informed judgement as far as medium of instruction is concerned. The findings in the present study suggest that African learners, in particular, who are from different linguistic backgrounds would prefer at least an English medium of instruction throughout schooling. Forcing them to learn in a language not of their preference may have disastrous consequences. If there was anything to be learnt from the unpopular Bantu education it is that people should not be forced to learn through a language they do not want. Another issue relates to the phrase 'mother-tongue education'. It has already been shown how variegated the linguistic situation in South Africa is despite more

than 40 years of attempts by the apartheid regime to keep linguistic groups apart. In addition, there are at least 25 tongues spoken in South Africa (Lemmer, 2002). The 11 official languages are, therefore, just a proportion of the full range of tongues. Thus, the argument that there will ever be a situation when all South Africans will be taught in their mother tongues is clearly presumptuous. As already argued, it makes more sense to talk about regional language education. In addition, recent research (ELTIC, 1997) has shown that although South Africans have generally welcomed the designation of official status of the major African languages through the 1996 Constitution, their use in education and workplace still lacks motivation.

The existing language-in-education policies, school language policies, language curricula and language practices in education also show government's ambivalence about the academic use of indigenous African languages in education (Madiba, 2010a). Although laws have been promulgated to transform and integrate higher education, there is still no university offering instruction through the medium of an African language (Banda, 2000: 59). The majority of South African schools and tertiary institutions still have a monolingual orientation despite the government's policy of additive bilingualism (ibid: 59).

Although perspectives on the use of indigenous African languages in education may be explained by citing politico-historical, economic and social factors, the more serious reason is academic ignorance, that is, ignorance of the importance of the mother tongue or multilingualism in scaffolding academic language and how this is done (Madiba, 2010a). However, the dilemma facing many children at Kutlwano Primary School, in this study, is the language of learning and teaching which, is not their mother tongue. Like other township schools, teaching at Kutlwano Primary may be happening in learners' second or third or fourth language. This implies that the learners do not actually own the literacy process because it is not framed in their own experiences, but contextualised within the language of the school. Therefore, literacy acquisition at school happens in isolation to the learner's language experiences. Also, the status of literacy at home

and in the community at large leaves the learner disempowered: that is, reading and writing does not feature very highly in the learner's everyday experiences. Therefore, mother-tongue education is without doubt pivotal with regard to communication and understanding in the classroom (Benson, 2005).

2.11 Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed literature that informs my study. The chapter drew together the cumulative findings from both large and small-scale literacy improvement interventions relevant to primary schooling in South Africa and Foundation Phase in particular. In the chapter, I drew attention to the overriding concepts in the study, that the South African Language in Education Policy (DoE 1997), and the language of learning and teaching models propose: specifically mother tongue education. In the chapter, the key concepts in the LiEP and the shortcomings of this policy in addressing the language problem in education were covered. The critique of home language teaching is that in Africa as a whole, which is in fact home to over 2000 languages or a third of the world's languages (Heine & Nurse, 2000), there seems to be no single indigenous African language that is used as a medium of instruction beyond primary education level in disciplines other than specific language courses (Prah, 2009). The languages of instruction in most African countries are the European languages, such as English, French and Portuguese. South Africa, therefore stands out as one of the many developing countries where children are mainly educated through foreign languages.

The chapter also covered many key arguments in literacy development. First, the chapter focused on global trends in literacy development and how standardised test scores of systematic tests position South Africa in the global literacy terrain. I then discussed the development in the South African education system focusing on how the past and current literacy trends affect the current education system and literacy rates in primary school in particular. I also discussed the initiatives implemented by the Gauteng Department of Education in trying to address the low literacy rates in the primary schools. Of particular importance, the chapter discussed the early childhood policy in South Africa and how it shapes early

childhood education. The chapter also discussed the shortcomings in the Early Childhood Policy and Language in Education Policy in addressing the literacy crisis in the South African education system. In addition, the chapter covered the language issues in education focussing on LoLT and learners' language proficiency. Lastly, I presented the mother tongue versus English debate, highlighting, in particular, the merits and shortcomings in mother tongue instruction in the foundation phase in South African primary schools. The chapter to follow, Chapter 3, presents the literature review of the study.



CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the discussion of the background to the study presented in Chapter 1 and covers the major theoretical and conceptual frameworks informing my study. In keeping with the aims of the research focus, the selection of theories and concepts was influenced by researchers working within the sociolinguistic field. In this chapter I provide a justification of using some key tenets of Lev Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory as a framework for conceptualising early childhood education. To complement the sociocultural lens of my study I also draw on key aspects of other theorists such as Bourdieu (1977a), to provide a way of thinking about the relationship between socioeconomic conditions and education. Bourdieu's theory of capital, in particular, raises questions about the aspect of the nature of literacy instruction that children receive at school in relation to their socioeconomic background and their everyday literacy practices. Sociocultural theory is positioned alongside the important contributions that society makes to individual development. This theory highlights the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live. This chapter is organized as follows: I first explain the sociocultural framework and key concepts, together with the sociocultural perspectives, as informs my work.

3.2 The sociocultural theory

In my study, I draw on sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 2007) and its underlying tenet that learning is a social practice. Sociocultural theory provides a framework from which to study questions of language and literacy (Smith, Sánchez & Machado-Casas, 2011). Lev Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory is applicable to the social cultural approach to literacy as it emphasises the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition. Sociocultural theory focuses not only on how adults and peers influence individual learning, but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes impact how instruction and learning take place. According to Vygotsky, children are born with basic biological

constraints on their minds. Each culture, however, provides what Vygotsky referred to as 'tools of intellectual adaptation' (Engeström, 1987). These tools allow children to use their basic mental abilities in a way that is adaptive to the culture in which they live. While one's culture might emphasise memorisation strategies like note-taking, other cultures might utilise tools like reminders or memorisation, for example. In the words of Lev Vygotsky (1978: 93) in *Mind in Society*, "Learning is more than the acquisition of the ability to think; it is the acquisition of many specialised abilities for thinking about a variety of things." This means that learning is not much about literacy as the acquisition of skills but rather on literacy as a social practice.

It also emphasises the essential role that social interactions play in cognitive development and the role that language plays. Social interaction can lead to full development of the ZPD. Vygotsky highlights the important role that culture plays, suggesting cultural differences can have a dramatic effect on development. He suggests that cognitive development can differ between different cultures (Gallagher, 1999). The other highlight in Vygotsky's theory is the importance of more knowledgeable adults and peers. The range of skills that can be developed with adult guidance or peer collaboration exceeds what can be attained by children alone. Vygotsky's theory was an attempt to explain consciousness as the end product of socialisation. For example, in the learning of language, our first utterances with peers or adults are for the purpose of communication but once mastered they become internalised and allow "inner speech" (Wertsch, 1985). The conceptions of Vygotsky are central to the sociocultural approaches to learning and development framing my study. The key concepts of sociocultural framework are discussed in the following section.

3.3 Key concepts within a sociocultural framework

3.3.1 Social interaction

The key concept in Vygotsky's (1978) theoretical framework is the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of human learning describes learning as a social process and the origination

of human intelligence in society or culture. Vygotsky believes that everything is learned on two levels: first, through interaction with others, and then integrated into the individual's mental structure. Vygotsky also suggests that human development results from a dynamic interaction between individuals and society. Through this interaction, children learn gradually and continuously from parents and educators. Vygotsky (1978) argues that this learning, however, can vary from one culture to the next. It is important to note that Vygotsky's theory emphasises the dynamic nature of this interaction. Society does not just impact people; people also affect their society. Vygotsky (1978) emphasises that community plays a central role in the process of 'making meaning'. Vygotsky believes that parents, caregivers, peers, and the culture at large are responsible for the development of higher order functions. According to Vygotsky (1978: 57):

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals.

As highlighted above, Vygotsky (1978: 90) argues that "learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organised, specifically human psychological function". The implication of Vygotsky's theory is that individual development cannot be understood without reference to the social and cultural context within which it is embedded. Vygotsky's theory of the sociocultural approach to development is relevant to my study because it is applicable to my focus on literacy learning in the South African township context. In my study, the case study materials on the nine-year-old South African learners are documented in order to trace how their relationships in the school and home settings made possible the development of new forms of literacy skills and expertise for themselves and the adults facilitating them. These case studies are in line with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of 'transformation' as a function of the dynamics in the significant relationships supporting the children over time. In the 1920s and 1930s, Vygotsky proposed that all human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbols, and can be best

understood in the context of their historical development (John-Steiner & Mahn, 2013). Vygotsky's contestation is that children acquire knowledge from their environment. These contestations are consistent with Goodman's (1996) argument that before children come to school, they already possess a wealth of literacy experiences and they have developed an implicit knowledge of language. Goodman's perspective follows the work of linguist Noam Chomsky (1965), who argued that humans have an innate predisposition to learn a language. In processing language, learners hypothesise, test, and confirm, refine, or disconfirm their theories by making sense of the "mass of data they have assembled" (Ferreiro, 1990: 14). According to Anderson (1994: 469), "A reader's schema, or organised knowledge of the world, provides much of the basis for comprehending, learning, and remembering the ideas in stories and texts". Schema theories ushered in a fundamental change in understanding the origins of knowledge. Readers and writers bring their knowledge to the text and use that knowledge to fine-tune and restructure their understanding (Rumelhart, 1980). This emphasis on how readers activate and use prior knowledge is linked to the concept of emergent literacy, which is discussed later in this chapter.

3.3.2 *Social mediation*

A second tenet of Vygotskian theory is the centrality of social mediation which is a major theme in educational discourse that acknowledges Vygotsky's challenge to individual explanations of learning and development (Fleer, Anning & Cullen, 2004). The idea of mediation is infused in Vygotsky's (1978: 40) triangular model of "a complex, mediated act" which is commonly expressed as the triad of subject, object, and mediating artefact. In the context of school learning, Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development explains the situation where learners can extend their learning through interaction with more capable assistance such as peers, parents or adults or siblings. In his argument Vygotsky states that a child's development within a ZPD involves social interaction, dialogue, and mediated activity between learners and with their teachers (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Vygotsky & Luria, 1994). As Wertsch (2007) argues, mediation is a central theme throughout Vygotsky's writing. In Wertsch's (2007) view, a hallmark of human consciousness

is that it is associated with the use of tools, especially “psychological tools” or “signs.” His approaches are based on the concept that human activities taking place in cultural contexts are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development (John-Steiner & Mahn, 2013). Anderson and Anderson (2017: 3) advise that as we consider the role of the significant other in mediation we should be mindful of significant differences in how adults and significant others mediate and structure learning across cultures. Therefore, in early childhood education, the notion of mediated learning is evident in the focus on relationships that mediate learning. Many practitioners have been assisted by the Vygotskian concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) in understanding how children learn with the support of others (Fleer et. al; 2004). According to Vygotsky (1978: 86), the zone of proximal development is,

[...] the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers.

The ZPD is the area of exploration for which the student is cognitively prepared, but requires help and social interaction to fully develop (Briner, 1999). Exploring the ZPD also includes the concept of “guided participation” which has its roots in sociocultural theory. It is a direct extension of Lev Vygotsky’s theory of the ZPD in which an adult or more competent peer provides just the right level and amount of support to help a younger, less capable learner acquire skills and knowledge (Wertsch, 2007; Rogoff, 1990). In a classroom, during activities between a teacher and a child, the teacher usually has a skill in mind that is within the child’s cognitive or mental reach and offers individualised support that is appropriate to the child and the situation (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). In this instance an educator or a more experienced peer is able to provide the learner with "scaffolding" to support the student’s evolving understanding of knowledge domains or development of complex skills. Collaborative learning, discourse, modelling, and scaffolding are strategies for supporting the intellectual knowledge and skills of learners and facilitating intentional learning. The distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential

development is determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, it is the range of abilities that a children can perform with assistance, but cannot yet perform independently. It is a level of development attained when children engage in social behaviour. The implication of social mediation in Vygotsky's theory is that learners should be provided with socially rich environments in which to explore knowledge domains with their fellow learners, educators and outside experts.

3.3.3 The more knowledgeable other

A third tenet of Vygotsky's (1978) theory is the 'more knowledgeable' other who is someone with a higher level of knowledge than the learner. It is the more knowledgeable other who provides the critical guidance and instruction during the sensitive learning period. Vygotsky (1978) views interaction with peers as an effective way of developing skills and strategies: he suggests that educators should use cooperative learning exercises where less competent children develop with help from more skilful peers within the zone of proximal development. While the children might not yet be capable of doing something on their own, they are able to perform the task with the assistance of a skilled instructor. According to Shaffer (2009) Vygotsky claimed that human cognition, even when carried out in isolation, is inherently sociocultural because it is affected by the beliefs, values, and tools of intellectual adaptation passed to individuals by their culture. And because these values and intellectual tools may vary dramatically from culture to culture, Vygotsky (1978) believed that neither the course nor the content of intellectual growth was as 'universal' as Piaget (1977) had assumed. This more knowledgeable other is often a parent, educator, or other adult, but this is not always the case. In many instances, peers and siblings provide valuable assistance and instruction. During certain periods of children's life, they may even look to peers more for information than they do to adults. Vygotsky (1978) believed that peer interaction was an essential part of the learning process. In order for children to learn new skills, he suggested pairing more competent learners with less skilled ones. When children are operating in the zone of proximal development, providing them with

the appropriate assistance and tools is referred to as 'scaffolding' (Wells, 1999). Although the term 'scaffolding' was never used by Vygotsky, it was first introduced by Wood, Brunner and Ross (1976) in an attempt to conceptualise teaching in the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Wells, 1999; Daniels, 2001). The ZPD defined as the distance between what a student can do with and without help (Vygotsky, 1978) is used to explain the social and participatory nature of teaching and learning. Scaffolding gives the learners what they need in order to accomplish a new task or skill. Eventually, the scaffolding can be removed and the learners may be able to complete the task or skill independently. In a classroom situation, it is important to realise that the zone of proximal development is a moving target. As a learner gains new skills and abilities, this zone moves progressively forward. Educators and parents can take advantage of this by continually providing educational opportunities that are a slight stretch of a child's existing knowledge and skills. It is believed that by giving children tasks that they cannot quite do easily on their own and providing the guidance they need to accomplish them, educators can progressively advance the learning process. Such an accomplishment can be explained in the notion of "closing the gap" which is an expression used to describe a child's growth or progress in ability within the ZPD (Shepard, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond & Rust, 2005: 279). For Vygotsky (1978), development is the transformation of socially shared activities into internalized processes (John-Steiner & Mahn, 2013). Development begins with interactions among people, and it results in socialisation as well as in higher mental functions. The family, community, and society into which a child is born create the higher mental processes in the child (McNamee, 2005). Therefore the concept of 'the knowledgeable other' is applicable to my research study as I explore how children develop literacy and that the "more knowledgeable members of a group engage in social mediation to bring others into the cultural practices" (Pérez, 1998: 4). This helps me as I try to understand the literacy practices that children engage in, in South African townships. The work of Vygotsky (1978) has become the foundation of much research and theory in cognitive development over the past several decades, particularly in trying to understand how learning occurs within a particular sociocultural context.

3.4 Literacy development in social contexts

With the view to theorising how literacy occurs within a particular sociocultural context, I also draw on other theorists. I particularly draw on theoretical aspects provided by Michel Foucault (1972) and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986b), in order to understand how school literacy is taken up by different groups of young children learning to read and write. Bourdieu, in particular, provides a way to analyse the cultural and social capital children bring to school, and what is taken up by the children in different social spaces. On the other hand, Foucault's (1977) central thinking regarding the relations between society, individuals, groups and institutions is the notion of knowledge and power, and how knowledge has been used to control and define power. Foucault (1977: 136) describes how a child is subject to social control as "an object and target of power" (Foucault 1977: 136). For Foucault (1977) bodies that can be known, used, manipulated and changed are docile bodies. Since the aim of my study is to examine approaches to literacy instruction in an economically disadvantaged township primary school in South Africa, Foucault's (1977) work offers a framework for analysing discursive practices of institutions such as the school that the children attend. In my research, I offer a thinking as to how the nature of knowledge is accessible to different social classes in society in relation to linguistic competence. The notion of accessibility of knowledge can be explained by Bernstein's (1971) notion of 'restricted and elaborated language codes' and Hirst's (1977) 'sacred profane knowledge'. As an educator, Bernstein (1971) was interested in accounting for the relatively poor performance of working-class learners in language-based subjects, when they were achieving scores as high as their middleclass counterparts on mathematical topics. Bernstein (1971) argues that the language of working class children is context specific: it is locked into specific relationships in particular social situations, and it is predictable. Because it is context specific, Bernstein (1971: 63-64) calls it a 'Restricted Code'. The 'Restricted Code' is contrasted with 'middle class' language, in which meaning is more abstract and universalistic, which he calls the "Elaborated Code". The concept of 'Code' refers to the structure of the culture. The code consists of regulative principles, tacitly acquired through induction into a culture (socialisation). On the other hand, Foucault (1979) argues

that only knowledge, skills and actions needed for the whole society are recognised as valid, and anything else is marginalised. Similarly, Bernstein (1971) asserts that there is a direct relationship between social class and language. He argues that the forms of spoken language in the process of an individual's learning initiate, generalise and reinforce special types of relationship with the environment and thus create particular forms of significance for the individual. This implies that the way language is used within a particular social class affects the way people assign significance and meaning to the things about which they are speaking. The code that a person uses symbolises his/her social identity (Bernstein, 1971). This knowledge is used to explain how the social class of children in my study could relate to their language abilities.

Another important scholar relevant to sociocultural theory is the influential French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), who was interested in the ways in which society is reproduced, and how the dominant classes retain their position. For the purposes of my study a few central concepts in Pierre Bourdieu's work will be applied; habitus, social capital and cultural capital. First, the notion of capital is very important to my study as Luke (1993: 6) describes it "as an index of relative social power, [it] remains Bourdieu's principal contribution to contemporary understandings of literacy." In my study, the role and influence of children's parents and home environment can be explained in terms of Pierre Bourdieu's (1977a) theory of cultural capital. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and cultural reproduction is one of the most valuable explanations in social stratification research of why educational and socioeconomic inequalities persist over generations. The theory outlines a complex relational system in which parents transmit cultural capital to children (Jæger & Breen, 2013: 2). Children then use their acquired cultural capital in the educational system and, as a consequence, families who possess cultural capital have a comparative advantage that helps them reproduce their privileged socioeconomic position (Bourdieu 1977a, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). According to Bourdieu, cultural capital exists in three states: embodied (linguistic competence, mannerisms, cultural knowledge, etc.); objectified (cultural goods, pictures, books, etc.); and

institutionalised (educational credentials) (Bourdieu 1977a, 1986a; Bourdieu & Passeron 1990) and it can contribute to social reproduction in all three states. For my study, the implication of the concept of cultural capital is that the resources the children are exposed to, such as: books, electronic media; and the mainstream educational system, all have a profound effect on the literacy competence of the children. In addition to arguing that parents transmit cultural capital to children, cultural reproduction theory also maintains that children convert their (embodied) cultural capital into educational success (institutionalised cultural capital), which in turn promotes socioeconomic success (Jæger & Breen, 2013: 8).

Bourdieu (1986a) views cultural reproduction as an important mechanism through which social reproduction takes place. Bourdieu (1986a) views society as comprising of different fields, that is, institutionalised subsystems in which the different types of capital carry different weight. Education is a major subfield, and one in which cultural capital carries particular power. Bourdieu argues that the educational system is biased towards valorising cultural capital, ascribing positive qualities to individuals and families who possess it. This institutional bias means that cultural capital, and especially the embodied cultural capital that learners put “on display” in school, conveys a false impression of academic brilliance which leads to favourable treatment by educators and peers and to a higher probability of educational success (Jæger & Breen, 2012). Since families in advantaged socioeconomic positions tend to possess more cultural capital than those in less advantaged families, and because children tend to inherit capital from parents, cultural capital contributes to social reproduction by increasing the likelihood of educational success (institutionalised cultural capital) and subsequent socioeconomic success. Transmission of cultural capital takes place through two channels: parents actively investing in transmitting their cultural capital to their child (for example, by taking the child to the theatre and by reading to the child) and the child passively acquiring cultural capital via exposure to objectified cultural capital in the home (for example, works of art). The child’s acquisition of cultural capital also depends on family resources other than cultural capital (for example, parents’ socioeconomic resources) and on the child’s academic ability

(Jæger & Breen, 2012). Jæger and Breen (2012) suggest that children accumulate cultural capital from their parents in a dynamic process that lasts throughout childhood and, furthermore, that cultural capital has a positive effect on educational performance. The theory of cultural reproduction has been used a great deal in quantitative and qualitative empirical research that addresses the ways in which cultural capital facilitates educational success (Lareau & Weininger, 2004; van de Werfhorst, 2010). Bourdieu also argues that individuals and families possess resources in the form of different types of capital – economic, social, and cultural – that can be invested to generate more resources or converted from one type of capital into another (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Economic capital refers to all forms of economic resources (income, wealth, property, etc.), while social capital refers to gainful social networks (Bourdieu, 1986). For Bourdieu, the theory of cultural capital assumes that parents in privileged socioeconomic positions have an intrinsic interest in transmitting their cultural capital to their children, what is termed ‘sponsored’ mobility (Turner, 1960; Abowitz, 2005). In the context of my study the implication is that children from affluent or middle class backgrounds are ‘naturally’ compelled to successes by their parents. Critics argue that while the theory maintains that parents transmit cultural capital to children, it does not explain how this transmission takes place. Bourdieu’s view is that language is one form of cultural capital with variable exchange value in social fields of institutions and communities. Practically, this translates into a classroom focus on identifying the social relations, sources of power and authority, of the institutions (for example mass media, workplaces, corporations, governments, educational institutions) where particular texts are used.

Second, in the notion of ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1986) offers a useful way of thinking about the bodies that are in the process of being transformed into schooled bodies. A more recent definition of habitus and presumably one of Bourdieu’s last and most definitive statements on the subject can be found in *The Logic of Practice* (1990: 53):

Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively “regulated” and “regular” without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.

According to Bourdieu (1990) habitus is conceptualised as a set of bodily dispositions that incline people to act and react in certain ways. Importantly, these dispositions generate regular practices because they are inculcated during early childhood experiences through the routine processes of training and learning. When applied to the South African concept, Alexander (2010: 10) views most indigenous black people in South Africa as willing to maintain their primary languages in family, community and religious contexts but they do not believe that these languages have the capacity to develop into languages of power. In terms of Bourdieu’s paradigm, the indigenous black people in South Africa’s consciousness reflects the reality of the linguistic market as they have become victims of a monolingual habitus, in spite the fact that most of them are proficient in two or more languages. Alexander (2010: 10) also argues that in post-independent South Africa the anglophile orientation of the black leadership has stunted the development of a reading culture and thus, impacts creative writing and scholarly endeavour in the African languages. Ironically, when policy makers place more emphasis on English there seem to be less commitment on the development of African languages.

3.5 The sociocultural perspectives

My research is framed around the sociocultural perspectives which include various theories in which researchers use literacy in context (Perry, 2012: 50). I adopted the sociocultural perspective in order to illuminate how the children’s literacy practices occur within and outside formal schooling in different sociocultural contexts. The sociocultural perspectives on literacy are located within sociolinguistic conceptualisations of the ways in which language instantiates culture (Gee, 1996; Halliday, 1973), and the way in which language is used varies

according to contexts (Bakhtin, 1986). Gee (1996: vii) places emphasis on language which he argues “always comes fully attached to ‘other stuff’: social relations, cultural models, power and politics, perspectives on experience, values and attitudes, as well as things and places in the world”. It is therefore important to note that language is never independent of the social world, as it always occurs within and is shaped by cultural context (Perry, 2012: 52). Perry (2012: 52) argues that literacy, as one form of language use, therefore reflects all this “other stuff” (Gee, 1996). Perry further argues that sociolinguists have described the many ways in which language and literacy are patterned according to context - what Bakhtin (1986) referred to as speech genres. In addition, Gee’s (1996: 127) construct of Discourses as an “identity kit” also illustrates the ways in which language is connected with social roles and political contexts (the concept of Discourses is further discussed in section 3.3.2). (Duranti, 1997: 45) also suggests that language, as a set of practices, is more than a system of words and grammatical rules, but “also an often forgotten or hidden struggle over the symbolic power of a particular way of communicating”. In the following sections, I therefore provide a critical overview of sociocultural perspectives on literacy that are influential to my study, focusing on four major perspectives: (1) literacy as social practice, (2) multiliteracies, (3) emergent literacies and (4) New Literacy Studies.

3.5.1 Literacy as a social practice

In this study I draw on sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998) and its underlying tenet that learning is a culturally constructed social practice. It is in the social environment that young children learn valuable skills and knowledge from the significant others. I use this tenet as an analytical tool to explain how children learn within different sociocultural contexts. Therefore, Anderson and Anderson (2017) advise that we have to be mindful that there are significant differences in how adults and significant others mediate and structure learning across cultures. Literacy as a social practice paradigm is heavily influenced by Street’s (1985) early work in Iran where he documented various ways in which people used reading and writing for different purposes in everyday lives. In South

Africa a significant study relevant to my work is documented by Liezl Malan (1996) in which she suggested in her paper, *Literacy learning and local literacy practice in Bellville, South Africa*, that the effect of literacy depends on what people actually do with it (Hayes, 2010; Gee, 2015b). In her study, Malan (1996) describes how women display different identities through different literacy practices. In my study I conceptualise literacy as a social practice based on the participants' environment.

The sociocultural perspective adopted in my study informs the ways I seek to understand the contexts in which literacy instruction occurs in the foundation phase of primary school level in South Africa as well as the literacy practices of young children in the South African townships. From a sociocultural perspective, I therefore argue that children's literacy development is understood by exploring the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which the children have grown up (Powell, 1999). This is from the premise that sociolinguistic theories support the view that a reader or writer uses everyday social and cultural knowledge; and values in acting on and interacting with print in an effort to make sense of a text (Farrar & Al-Qatawneh, 2010). When studying children's literacy development we are then obliged to consider how the thinking of particular people in a community has directed the children's thinking, how the children understand who they are in relation to others, and how they interpret their world (McNamee, 2005; Pérez, 2004). Pérez has credited Bruner (1996) with the insight that individuals bring their cultural experiences with the world and text, and their knowledge and skills with letters, words, and text, to their interpretation of written language. "Knowledge is constructed based on social interactions and experience" (Tracey & Morrow, 2006: 103). For example, if a child's life experiences are situated solely in a township context, his or her understanding of the world will be from a township perspective which may be divorced from rural and urban experiences. This "knowledge deficiency" (Hirsch, 2006: 13) relating to the children's social contexts suggests incongruence between school instruction and knowledge that children bring from their home environment. In reality there is a difference between knowledge that children in townships have and the knowledge that is privileged in the schools. The knowledge in the schools primarily aligns with middle class

colonial preferences and sensibilities (Noxy, 2013). Sociocultural theorists, therefore, comprise the “social practice camp [which] sees literacy as primarily social and cultural” (Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, & Degener, 2004: 26) and argue that learning to read cannot be separated from the setting in which it occurs (Tracey & Morrow, 2006: 104). Street (1984) refers to this model of literacy as “ideological,” pointing out that literacy relates to power structures in society. Gee (2000b) underlines the way power relations superimpose themselves on the development of the child. The dominant culture has traditionally imposed its language and concept of adequate skills on minority groups who may not share the dominant experiences and values, thereby maintaining the existing power dynamics. This is the skills based approach where children are taught skills in school, which may have little or no relevance to their life experiences. The children’s level of acquisition of skills such as reading and writing are measured using systematic evaluation tests.

Since the sociocultural perspective is used to understand literacy as both a social and cultural process, it is important to examine theoretical perspectives concerning language acquisition and use in both written and oral form (Powell, 1999). Both written and oral language is a symbolic system, a system of signs used in the process of making meaning. Communication through this symbolic system is functional; that is, it is used for realising certain purposes within particular social contexts. In developing language, children learn these functions as they acquire the forms and structures of language (Powell, 1999: 9). Halliday (1985a) then suggests that children’s language is a dynamic, interrelated phenomena that has two essential functions: a ‘doing’ or pragmatic function that allows children to communicate their desires and intentions, and a ‘thinking or mathematic function’ that enables them to create meaning and to express their thoughts. For my study, it can be argued that children learn language through social functions as acquired through participation with others in the act of communicating (Powell, 1999).

The social practice theorists, therefore, reject the cognitivists’ premise that literacy consists only of decontextualised, discrete, linguistic skills (sounds of

letters, knowledge of words, etc.) as is the concept that reading and writing skills are transmitted from one individual to another (Pérez, 2004). Pérez clarifies that from the sociocultural standpoint, being literate means being able to read and write in a culturally appropriate way, that the skills are not only in the individual's head, but that literacy is an interactive process that is modified according to the sociocultural environment. In addition, "skills, strategies, and understandings are appropriated, not transmitted" (Maloch, 2004: 2). Purcell-Gates et al. (2004: 26) corroborate that "literacy practice" replaces "literacy skill" and that literacy development occurs inside and outside schools and across the life span of a person. The values, beliefs, and practices that one's community possesses with respect to a particular literacy event affects how one engages in the event. Street (1984) concurs that literacy is always embedded in some social form, and it is always learned in relation to uses in specific social conditions. Sociocultural views of literacy as a system of making meaning in social contexts (Wells, 1986) and the ability to produce signs for meaning are consistent with the theory of semiotics. Halliday (1975: 122) observes, "Culture is itself a semiotic system, a system of meanings or information that is encoded in the behaviour potential of the members". Research from these perspectives widens the literacy terrain beyond the ability to encode and decode print and addresses the complexities of social and cultural contexts.

The work of Bakhtin (1981) is also important in the sociocultural perspective of understanding literacy expressions in an early childhood classroom, focusing on the dialogic nature of utterances. Bakhtin emphasises the critical role of context to any utterance. Perhaps along with the utterance, Bakhtin might include expressions or modes of communication including writing, gesture, art, and today's digital imaging and hypertexts. The utterance is one unit; it can be a single word or a whole text, but it is not purely linguistic; it also takes in inner speech, social, and historical contexts and always anticipates or evokes a response (Bakhtin, 1986). From this frame of thought, any expression of communication is firmly situated in specific cultural, social, and historical contexts and is always connected to what was previously communicated and what will be communicated

thereafter. Linked to this study, Bakhtin's conception of 'utterance' explains the contextualisation of children's communicative practices. The second sociocultural perspective influential in my study is the emergent literacy perspective discussed in the following section.

3.5.2 Emergent literacy

For the purposes of my study, I take into account the emergent literacy perspective (Clay, 1972; Sulzby & Teale, 1991), as I focus on a sample of township children's out-of-school literacy practices. This perspective is relevant to my study because the emergent literacy practices provide artefacts and evidence of literacy engagement from a time in children's life when they are not yet formally regulated by school practices (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). In the context of this study, this perspective considers the children's encounters with literacy at home before their encounters with formal literacy in school. This perspective raises questions around the relevance of literacy practices that children encounter before formal schooling. Research around emergent literacy, shows that literacy learning begins outside school, long before formal instruction commences (Dixon & Lewis, 2008). Sulzby & Teale (1991) point out that before emergent literacy developed as an area of study, children's literacy practices before entering school were ignored. It was generally believed that literacy development did not begin until the child encountered formal instruction at school. I find this approach to literacy learning significant to my study as it underlines how the literacy practices that children acquire before they enter school shape their formal literacy practices. When one is conducting research of this nature, consideration has to be made of children's social practices. Emergent literacy can be observed in a child growing in a literate environment before the child even starts formal schooling. Hill (2006) argues that children from print-rich environments, who engage in meaningful literacy activities, learn to read more easily than children who come with a paucity of literacy experiences. He further argues that the pre-conventional features of children's emergent literacy practices will therefore continue once they enter school, and these features are more likely to be observed in their unconventional out-of-school literacy practices than in their school practices (Hill, 2006). The

emergent literacy approach views literacy as a life process that begins in the moments children begin to hear, see, touch, smell, taste, and talk as they respond to the cultural models of speaking, viewing, reading, and writing that surround them in their communities (Wells, 1986). Children apply and re-enact the processes and practices that they observe in their print environment. These practices may include pretend reading and writing and preconventional writing in form of scribbling, drawing and phonetic spelling (Hill, 2006). On the other hand, writing from a UK context, Kress (1997) points out that young children may be unable to make a clear distinction between drawing and writing. Kress' (1997) argument is that children start literacy development as pictographers as they try to communicate meaning on paper. When working within an emergent literacy paradigm, Ferreiro (1984: 100) uses the word 'invent' to point out that there is "more at work than immature minds in isolation" in children's early attempts at writing. It has to be noted that most of these experiences occur within children's family or immediate settings hence the relevance of family literacies discussed in the next section.

3.5.3 *Family literacies*

According to Anderson & Anderson (2017) the concept of family literacy means different things to different people. To some, it means naturally occurring activities and events that involve reading and writing as families go about their daily lives. For others, family literacy is characterised by programmes designed to enhance literacy learning within families, especially for young children (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, & Teichert, 2017). The family literacy programmes involving children and their parents usually involve two generations (Wasik, 2012) which Hannon (2003: 10) describes as "programmes to teach literacy knowledge and make use of learner's family relationships and engagement in family literacy practices". The other conception of family literacy programmes may mean teaching parents how to prepare their children for school, focusing on school like activities, often with a heavy emphasis on storybook reading (Purcell-Gates, 2017). This conception is consistent with the view that family literacy is a social and cultural practice associated with written text in a home (Cairney, 2003: 85). In

contrast, it is now generally accepted that family literacy includes a range of activities, not just reading (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich & Kim, 2010). As Senechal and Young (2008) indicated, shared book reading is heavily promoted within family literacy programmes and indeed, is often seen as the quintessential family literacy activity, even though it is not a universal cultural practice (Anderson et. al., 2010), especially in South African black communities, and there are questions as to the strength of the claims made about its contribution to children's literacy development (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994).

The western conceptualisation of family literacy has two different orientations: that of the study of reading and writing embedded in the flow of everyday activity, and those focussing on how parents and siblings orient children towards success and failure in school literacy (Prinsloo, 2006: 16-17). However, Anderson & Anderson (2017: 2) point out that such literacy programmes are usually offered in, and promote, the dominant language of the community and the language of instruction in school. Family literacy programmes are also said to be proliferated (Anderson, Anderson & Sadiq, 2017: 644) and critiqued in that they often lack any assessment or evaluation of their efficacy (Purcell-Gates, 2000). Other critics (Reyes & Torres, 2007) have also claimed that family literacy programmes tend to present a deficit view of the families for whom they are designed as they often ignore the day-to-day literacy practices occurring in homes, while promoting a middle class, western view of literacy that is reflected and reproduced in school, and favour English (or the country or region's dominant language) and ignoring or discouraging the first or home languages of families (Anderson, Anderson & Sadiq, 2017: 645). Another orientation to family literacy that is relevant to my study involves explicit kinds of literacy activities. This includes shared book-reading activities amongst parents and children as well as homework and other school related activities (Prinsloo, 2006: 17).

Research in family literacy draws on socio-historical theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Central to Vygotsky's (1962) contention is the argument that the nature of school learning is different from the learning that takes place outside school, that is, in

everyday life. For Vygotsky (1962) the type of knowledge learned at school is different from that gained through every day experiences. He identifies six ways in which these learning situations are different, namely: content of instruction, awareness, systematicity, nature, level of development, and directions of growth. Vygotsky argues that in everyday life children form concepts spontaneously while school knowledge (with scientific concepts) is premeditated. According to Vygotsky (1962: 106), a child is aware of school concepts and can use them voluntarily and cannot use his or her spontaneous concepts to solve problems as he or she “finds it hard to solve problems involving life situations because he or she lacks awareness of his or her concepts and therefore cannot operate with them at will as the task demands”. According to Vygotsky (1962), the spontaneous concepts seem to be unsystematic to the learners as learners do not see them as connected to other concepts. He advocates that when these concepts are learned, children must be shown how they relate to other concepts already learned. Vygotsky also argues that the nature of spontaneous concepts is different from that of scientific concepts since spontaneous concepts are concrete, while scientific concepts are abstract.

Vygotsky (1962) views learning as socially constructed since parents and caregivers, for example, verbally guide children within the zone of proximal development (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, & Kim, 2010). According to Vygotsky (1962), adults structure activities so that children engage in more complex behaviours than they could on their own. Adults and significant others pose questions, phrase statements and provide support relative to children’s current knowledge, and thus extend children’s learning beyond where they are currently functioning. More recently, Rogoff (2003) and others have emphasised the cultural aspects of such learning, showing that the ways in which learning is supported significantly differ across cultures. And as will be discussed later in Chapter 5 of this thesis, Gregory, Long, & Volk (2004) have demonstrated the important role of younger children in supporting one another’s learning. Researchers in the field of family literacy have also examined the role of extended family members in young children’s literacy development. For example, the work

of Gregory, Long, & Volk (2004) with South Asian Bengali immigrant families demonstrated the important role of grandparents in young children's literacy development. Using ethnographic techniques, these researchers found that grandparents used a complex blend of traditional teaching practices from the Bengal and contemporary western pedagogy as they worked productively with their grandchildren with a wide array of texts. According to Gregory (2017: 11), these practices exemplify syncretism that they saw not just as a mixing of traditional cultural practices and forms, but "instead as a creative process in which people reinvent culture as they draw on diverse resources, both familiar and new".

The significance of family literacies is also exemplified in Heath's (1983) seminal study of three different communities, in the United States of America in which she explored the ways in which young children were introduced to literacy by their families. The communities she studied were physically situated close to one another, but were far apart in other ways, most noticeably, as the title of her book suggests, in their 'ways with words'. Based on her observation, Heath (1983) argues that in these two communities the different ways that the children learned to use language were dependant on the culture of each community; specifically how each community structured its family life; defined the roles people played and socialised its children. In both the working-class black community she called Trackton and the white working-class community she called Roadville, children were prepared in ways that varied from those of black and white middle-class. The latter replicated the ways of the school, while the former were strongly influenced by the ways of their church. In Trackton and Roadville, children were differently prepared to negotiate "the meaning of the printed word and the production of the written text" (Heath 1983: 348). The underlining importance of the written text in a home is also emphasized by Cairney (2003: 85) as a fundamental aspect of family literacy. This aspect of family literacy composed of reading and writing is embedded in the flow of everyday activity focusing on how parents and siblings orient children towards success and failure in school literacy (Prinsloo, 2006: 16-17). In Heath's (1983) study the children were taught to recite the bible in the church most Roadville residents attended. Learning at church was similar to what

they experienced at home. On the other hand the Trackton people had distinctive ways of church worship, which were based on formal reading and writing and a wide range of oral performance. In her study, Heath (1983: 345) concluded that the social and cultural practices of the communities she studied influenced their children's writing and reading ability and subsequently influenced how they performed at school. Her analysis of the communities she studied is consistent with her conclusion that the children's out of school literacy practices and attitudes of their parents towards learning is influential to their performance at school. Drawing from these observations and conclusions forms the basis of arguments in my research project as it examines the relevance of children's out-of-school literacy practices to the learning process. Engaging with literacy is always a social act that is unique to every community and deeply entrenched in the cultural practices of that community. It therefore can be seen that the informal social nature of family literacies means that children cannot pass or fail the everyday family literacy as may be the case with school literacy, which is skills-based, as family literacy is said to be embedded in everyday activities such as shopping (Varenne & McDermott, 1995). My research is therefore interested in the consequence of children engaging in family literacy on their own or with the aid of their parents or by observing their parents and siblings. By observing their parents and other children engaging in literacy activities, children learn different uses of language in practice. These practices may include shared book-reading activities amongst parents and children as well as homework and other school related activities (Prinsloo, 2006: 17). There have also been other studies of church literacy. For example, Zinsser (1986) describes how the fundamentalist church was a site for the acquisition of specific Bible literacy for children as young as four and five years old. Duranti and Ochs (1993) have described traditional church literacy in Samoa including the use of Samoan alphabet chart, Pi Taut au, and its transfer to Samoan community in southern California (Duranti, Ochs, Ta'ase, 2004). Tagoilelagi (1995) has commented on the influence of traditional Samoan culture, in which the church is a dominant factor, on the progress of young Samoan children in school in New Zealand. She draws congruency between the ways

Samoan families and those in Heath's (1983) black community of Trackton socialised their children.

In his seminal work, American historian, Cremin (1976) identified educative settings beyond the school, as not only sources of learning such as the family and the church, but also institutions such as libraries, newspapers, the popular press and displays such as advertisements in the neighbourhood (Dickie & McDonald, 2011). Cremin (1976: 31) showed that "the relationships among the institutions constituting a configuration of education may be complementary or contradictory". Both Heath and Cremin's work is congruent with the general field of situational literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Knobel & Lankshear, 2003) and is part of a shift from the common belief that schools are main cause of population literacy levels to acknowledgement of the influence of everyday literacy on learners. In my study, I therefore explore the children's encounters with literacy in their everyday literacy practices outside school. Their encounters with literacy follow a multiliteracies perspective inclusive of multimodal and multimedia communication which correspond with the dialogic nature of language in which utterances are interconnected. The multiliteracies perspective is discussed in the following section.

3.6 The multiliteracies perspective

Studies on and about literacy have gradually shifted from a singular focus on school-sponsored learning to a more complex focus on the practices of children across socio-political contexts (Ball, 2006; Lee, Grigg & Donahue, 2007) leading to a multiliteracies perspective. A multiliteracies approach informs a pedagogical approach that enables educators to experiment with multiple methods of teaching, encouraging multiple expressions and modes of communication. In my research study the relevance of the multiliteracies theory is applicable to pedagogical approaches in the primary school classroom. Multiliteracies represent the multiple modes and media of communication, in the classroom, that my study seeks to address. In light of the situated nature of literacies, the relevance of the

children's experiences of multi-modes of communication outside school cannot be overlooked.

Cope and Kalantzis (2013: 5) advocate a multimodal pedagogical framework in order to address the increasing multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning-making where the textual is also related to the visual, the aural, the spatial, the behavioural, and so on. According to this conception, meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal. Multimodality, according to Kress (2003), describes the multiple interactions in which literacies are expressed and they include writing, painting, speech, dance, gesture, music, image, and sculpture. Gee (1996) uses the term 'literacies' as a way of distinguishing between multiple discourses used in social contexts, namely: primary and secondary Discourse. For Gee (1996), primary Discourses are those ways of using language that are acquired in primary socialisation, at home and family and in play, which I discussed in the section on emergent literacies. Our primary Discourse gives us our initial and often enduring sense of self and sets the foundations of our culturally specific vernacular language that we speak everyday as 'non-specialised' people. Gee (2012: 153) has noted that nearly all human beings, except under extraordinary conditions, acquire an initial Discourse during their primary socialization. According to Gee (2012: 154) all the Discourses we acquire later in life, beyond our primary Discourse, are acquired through a more "public sphere" than our initial socialising group and he terms them 'secondary Discourses'. These 'secondary Discourses', can be acquired within institutions that are part of wider communities such as schools. Secondary discourses are those discourses that children are apprenticed to outside of their early home experiences. Gee (2012: 2) argues that in order to appreciate language in its social context, we need to focus not on language but on "Discourse", with a capital "D" which include much more than language. Discourse with a capital 'D' is composed of distinctive ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking with other people and with various objects, tools, and technologies, so as to enact specific socially recognisable activities. For Gee (2001) Discourse is an 'identity kit' and a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, of acting that can

be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or social network (Gee, 2001: 526-7). For Gee (2012: 4), each of us is a member of many Discourse communities and each Discourse represents one of ever multiple identities. These identities might be being a street gang member, a teacher, a youth group member, a third grade learner in the classroom or at home. (Gee, 2012: 152). There are many different 'social languages' connected in complex ways with different Discourses in as much as there are different sorts of literacy – many literacies – connected in complex ways with different Discourses (Gee, 2012: 3). Language, therefore, makes no sense outside of Discourses and the same applies to literacy. According to Gee (2001: 529), literacy is a fluent control of secondary Discourses. This raises the issue of dominant Discourses and powerful literacy that are not always practised in poorer communities but present in school, whereas literacy should also consider the cultural and social practices children encounter outside school (Dixon & Lewis, 2008). Although not always the case, in this study there is conflict between home-based Discourses and the mainstream Discourses of the school. According to school-based Discourses, children who are not from the mainstream school culture are mostly considered 'non-standard' (Gee, 2012: 4). This concept is linked to the controversial issue of standard and non-standard language dialects which I discuss extensively in the discussion chapters of this project. I find Gee's (2000a) work with Discourses relevant to further conceptualise the 'social situation' of in-school and out-of-school literacy practices as language makes no sense outside Discourses and the same applies to literacy. Gee (1996: 143) describes the importance of literacy as "a mastery of a Secondary Discourse involving print. And one can substitute 'print' with various other sorts of texts and technologies: painting, literature, film, television, computers, and telecommunications". I then apply the term multiliteracies as an expression of multiple modes and media of communication that children encounter in school and outside school. In other words, in this case study I focus on forms of literacy that young children express through a variety of modes and media including those associated with new technologies such as cellular telephones, computers and television. The children are exposed to these modes either at home or at school. My research study exploring the Grade 3 learners' in-

school and out-of-school literacy practices draws on the notion of multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Gee, 1996; Kress, 2003; Street, 1995). In this study of young children's literacy practices, I shift from the traditional views of early literacy instruction which tend to primarily focus on print literacy. It can then be noted that children in the 21st century have to adapt to the requirements of the digital age and be able to use multiple literacies to meet the informational challenges in order to manage the complexities of the political, economic, and technological world beyond school (Kress, 2003). It is in this regard that it is argued that learners today and in the future will need concepts of print that are much more visual than the graphic representation of letters which have served writers in the past (Kress, 2010).

To further conceptualise multiliteracies, the New London Group (NLG) has theorised a pedagogical framework comprising four essential components: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. Situated practice involves immersing children in new experiences that also draws on interests, knowledge, and experiences learners bring with them to school. The overt instruction is an explicit approach to teaching meant to help learners see patterns in language and to gain an understanding of the purpose of language. Critical framing extends the children's understanding of the purpose of language to more critical thought by creating new meanings for language. Transformed practice is the act of applying knowledge to new contexts thereby transforming meanings (Kalantzis, Cope & Fehring, 2002). The New London Group's (NLG) pedagogy on multiliteracies takes a sociocultural perspective that includes modes of representation differing according to culture and context. According to the NLG, communication incorporates multiple modes: aural, visual, linguistic, spatial, and multimodal (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Recent studies on literacy practices have pointed, firstly, to multilingual dimensions of most contemporary literacy practices (Gregory & Williams, 2000; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000) and secondly, to the multimodal changes in the modalities of representational communicational landscapes (Gee, 2001; Kress, 1997, 2001) where mixes of written, visual and aural modes of communication characterise

new forms of screen-based and text-based communication. The multiliteracies perspective gave rise to the notion of New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Gee, 1996; Street, 1995; Barton, 1994) which construes language as not only connected across modes and media but across time and space. Since NLS forms the major framework of my study, it is fully discussed in the following section.

3.7 New Literacy Studies

The concept of New Literacy Studies (NLS) is associated with the work of literacy researchers from a range of disciplines ranging from socio-cultural anthropology (Heath 1983, Street 1984), cultural psychology (Scribner & Cole 1981) and socio and applied linguistics (Gee 1990, 1996, 2000b, 2014; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Barton, 2006; Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009). It is a concept originally introduced in the early 1990s in the work of Gee (1990) and Street (1993). Heath's (1983) seminal ethnographic research, already discussed in this chapter, lay the foundations for a New Literacy Studies (NLS) approach. The NLS has developed as a field of inquiry, providing a better grasp of the nature of 'literacy' as a socio-cultural practice which acquires its meaning from the context in which it is embedded (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 1994, 2000b). In this study I use New Literacy Studies located in the sociocultural framework (Gee, 1996; Street, 1995; Barton, 1994). The concept of New Literacy Studies (NLS), exemplified in the work of Street (1984, 2001); Barton and Hamilton (1998); Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000) and Willinsky (1990) addresses literacy from a sociocultural perspective. Street (2003b: 77) explains,

What has come to be termed New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Gee, 1991; Street, 1996) represents a new tradition in defining the nature of literacy, not focusing much on literacy as a 'technology of the mind' (Goody, 1968; 1977) or as a set of skills, but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice (Street, 1985). This entails the recognition of multiple literacies, varying according to time and space, but also contested in relations of power...and asking "whose literacies" are dominant and whose are marginalized or resistant.

In this sense, the term 'New Literacy Studies' equates literacy to social practice (Street, 1985). Lankshear and Knobel (2007: 12) explain that what is "new" in the NLS sense comprises "a new paradigm for looking at literacy, as opposed to a paradigm, based on psychology that was already well established". Therefore,

theorists of literacy as a social practice would conceptualise literacy as what people do with reading, writing, and texts in real world contexts and why they do it (Perry, 2012: 54); as Barton and Hamilton (2000: 7) note, “in the simplest sense literacy practices are what people do with literacy”. However, they caution that practices involve more than actions with texts; practices connect to, and are shaped by, values, attitudes feelings, and social relations. In this regard social relationships are crucial, as “literacy practices are more usefully understood as existing in the relationships between people, within groups and communities, rather than as a set of properties residing in individuals” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000: 8). New Literacy Studies theorists have illustrated that as children are socialised into particular literacy practices, they are simultaneously socialised into discourses that position them ideologically within the larger social milieu (Luke, 1994; Gee, 2001; Luke & Carrington, 2003). In addition, sociocultural theorists have illustrated how the social organisation of learning of out-of-school settings can promote language and literacy development (Gutierrez, Baquedamo-Lopez, & Alvarez, 2001; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Vasquez, 2003). This contestation recognises multiliteracies, varying according to time and space but also contested in relation to power (Street, 2003b) that children engage in, in school and out of school. The contexts of interest for NLS extend beyond formal teaching environments, and include the practices that typify children and adults’ everyday literacy lives (Sefton-Green, Marsh, Erstad, & Flewitt, 2016: 14). According to Gee (2012) new literacies studies is about studying new types of literature beyond just print literacy, especially digital new technologies, embedded in popular culture. This conceptualisation is relevant to my study since I am dealing with children in the digital world. Recent critiques of NLS have highlighted shortcomings related to difficulty in accounting for the way power plays a role in shaping literacy practices (Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Collins & Blot, 2003). Brandt and Clinton (2002) call for literacy studies that include an analysis of both localising and globalising activity to find a means for exploring the role of power in local literacy practices. Lenters (2007) argues that Brandt and Clinton’s (2002) call has prompted much discussion within the NLS (Barton & Hamilton, 2005; Reder & Davila, 2005; Street, 2003a) and

several studies that have followed have taken up this theoretical challenge (Pahl & Roswell, 2006).

Researchers in South Africa have not been an exception in undertaking work on New Literacy Studies (NLS). In South Africa, studies associated with NLS have been carried out by researchers including Prinsloo and Walton (2008) and Walton (2009). In their studies they found that new reading and writing practices undertaken through the use of media are still unreachable to the majority of learners. For example, Prinsloo and Walton (2008: 104) found that most children in townships, encountered computer-based digital literacy only in school settings. That is in contrast with other research on children's encounters with literacy that found that children in low-income areas of Cape Town children used digital media and engaged in digital reading and writing on mobile phones even outside school (Kreutzer, 2009; Walton, 2009). Walton (2009: ii) describes the use of new media thus:

In most of the country's underperforming schools, where a majority of teens are left behind academically, many experience difficulties with literacy instruction and most have limited access to books and computers. Yet, as a result of South Africa's mobile phone 'revolution' and a thriving mobile youth culture, outside school teens increasingly enjoy frequent rich interactions with the written word and with digital technologies in their peer networks.

From a NLS perspective, these teenagers' literacy practices with mobile phones are social situated in nature especially where language and literacy genres are developed. In a study carried out by Deument (2010) with low income Cape Town youth she found that digital literacy practices with texting in peer-groups produced new forms of language, adding to the linguistic repertoires of individuals (Lemphane, 2012). Although these NLS works undertaken in South Africa have been invaluable in drawing attention to the socially situated nature of literacy practices in different communities there is still a gap in the study of early childhood literacy in South Africa as several low-income children and poor schools do not have access to new media such as mobile phones, iPads, tablets or computers.

Therefore, I consider the New Literacy Studies (NLS) approach to be relevant in addressing literacy problems in South Africa as it provides a paradigm shift in addressing the literacy problem in South African schools. New Literacy Studies employs a social approach of literacy which views literacy learning as a social practice that also includes popular culture (Street, 1984). Street (2003a) points out that when addressing issues ethnographically, literacy researchers have constructed a conceptual apparatus that both coins some new terms and gives new meanings to some old ones. In order to conceptualise literacies, two major theoretical positions occupy the paradigmatic space that determines how literacy is viewed (Edelsky 1986: 92). The two positions are proposed in Brian Street's (1985) notion of multiple literacies which makes a distinction between 'autonomous' and 'ideological' models of literacy and further develops a distinction between literacy events and literacy practices (Street, 1988).

3.7.1 Autonomous and ideological models of literacy

In the autonomous model of literacy, Street (1985) views literacy as a set of skills, which can be learnt and disembedded from the context in which it is used and appropriated. The "autonomous" model under which most formal literacy instruction operates, conceptualises literacy in strictly technical terms (Perry, 2012: 53). This "autonomous" model is associated with the view that people can develop abilities to read all texts and produce different kinds of writing. The "autonomous" model views literacy as being unconnected to any specific context but as neutral, decontextualised skills that can be applied in any situation (Perry, 2012). According to Horn (2016) the autonomous model is most often utilized in today's education system as it supposedly helps prepare learners for standardised testing. The autonomous model conceptualises literacy as a skill to be mastered and it is without social implications, which means that learning particular literacy skills leads to greater social attainment; this leads to an issue of power of one skill over another (Horn, 2016: 3). That is, according to the autonomous model, people can only use literacy once they have been taught the component technical skills. This notion implies that literacy is considered something that one has or does not have; people are either literate or illiterate, and those who are illiterate are

considered deficient (Perry, 2012). Supporters of the autonomous model view literacy as the independent variable that leads to success in a world where non-literate people are viewed as lacking intelligence (Horn, 2016: 3). Advocates of the autonomous model of literacy argue that “the acquisition of literacy is a necessary precursor to and invariably results in economic development, democratic practice, cognitive enhancement, and upward social mobility” (Graff & Duffy, 2008: 1). Most classroom instruction focuses on skills-based practices and pedagogies that view literacy as neutral and autonomous (Carter, 2006). Horn (2016: 4) argues that “the vast majority of assessments in existence for elementary schools fit under the autonomous model of literacy”. The notion that literacy can be measured by test scores conceptualises literacy as skills acquisition practice, and posits a view of literacy as a neutral set of skills to be learned or acquired (Everett, 2006). In other words, in this definition, literacy skills are not shaped or influenced by social or cultural factors and thus considered neutral. Street (1995) views the autonomous model as a narrow view of literacy and advocate for a much broader description that includes the complexities of social and cultural contexts. In this study, I use the terms ‘cultural’ and ‘social contexts’ in both overlapping and integrative ways. Also in his criticism of the autonomous model, Prinsloo (2005: 16) argues that the model frames literacy in the context of a Western construct of modernity and progress. Therefore, Prinsloo (2005) sees this framing of literacy as erroneously claiming that literacy gives rise to particular universal characteristics and to particular good effects that coincide with Western forms of social organisation and economic strategies. The other shortcoming is that when viewing literacy through an autonomous lens, ignores the multiple modes of literacy that currently exist in current instructional approaches thereby rendering irrelevant to current society (Larson, 2006). Relying solely on the autonomous model of literacy alienates learners and puts them at a disadvantage for participating in current and future literate events as well as participating as functional participants in the global economy (Larson, 2006). Street’s alternative model of literacy is that of the ideological model.

In contrast to the “autonomous” model, the “ideological” model conceptualises literacy as social and cultural in nature and forming part of people’s daily life practices (Street, 1984; Heath, 1983; Barton 1994). Street (2003b: 12) argues that the ideological model of literacy offers a more culturally sensitive view of literacy practices varying from context to context. His argument is that this model views literacy as a social practice, not simply as a technical and neutral skill. Furthermore, this model is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles (Street, 2003a: 1-2). Relatedly, an ideological conception of literacy can be seen as compatible with Vygotsky’s notion of learning. Vygotsky views learning as a process during which learners construct their own understanding of a subject by integrating information they are receiving with information they already know (Vygotsky 1992). This places emphasis on the importance of building on the learner’s prior knowledge to build new knowledge with the ultimate goal to develop the learner’s own conceptual framework (McGuire, 2006). Hall (1998: 11) describes the ideological model as involving “literacies rather than literacy and that the use of literacies creates engagement, involves wider networks, and is consistently related to the everyday lives of people in their communities”. Therefore, from an ideological viewpoint, technical skills such as reading and writing are influenced by and set in particular cultural practices (Street, 1993). Street adds that this model is about social activity where literacy has a part in the knowledge that people draw in such activity. This model helps us conceptualise literacy in a sociocultural perspective. It illustrates that our perceptions about literacy are based upon certain ideological perspectives, therefore the way literacy is defined has profound implications for the ongoing literacy debate (Powell, 1999: 9). Powell (1999) argues that the major problem with the current definitions of literacy is that they tend to ignore the social and cultural dimensions of both spoken and written language. She argues that such perceptions confine literacy to a technological input-output and ignore the way language is acquired within sociocultural contexts (Powell, 1999:9). Street (2003a: 2) points out that researchers in NLS find it problematic employing an ideological model of literacy when simply using the term “literacy” as their unit or object of study. In this regard, Street says that literacy comes already loaded with

ideological and policy presuppositions that make it difficult to carry out ethnographic studies of the variety of literacies across contexts.

My study mainly draws on an ideological model (Street, 1993) of literacy that emphasises the social contexts in which literacy is learnt. I believe that there are skills and cognitive strategies, such as alphabet knowledge, phonological/phonemic awareness, that children need to acquire in order to participate in literacies. This can enable them to function effectively in an institutional knowledge space such as school. When the issue of literacy is discussed, it is important to speak of practices, activities, events, ideologies, identities and discourses, both in school and out (Hull & Schultz, 2001). As I illustrate in this study, practices such as reading and writing, like speaking, are inherently social and cultural acts (Powell, 1999). The applicability of Street's 'ideological model' to this research is that it highlights the importance of the social contexts in which the practices of writing and learning take place and to the ideological and cultural influences of the community on such practices as there are different literacy practices that are linked to different sites like schools, churches, homes and businesses. Horn (2016: 3) argues that the ideological model is a much more realistic way of viewing literacy because people are influenced by their social surroundings whereas the autonomous view suggests that literacy develops separately from social and cultural contexts. For Horn (2016: 3) literacy changes historically-speaking since literacy is learned through varying social contexts as well as changing situations. Accordingly, the development of early literacy practices (and their study) is understood in relation to the contexts in which those practices are culturally, historically, and ideologically situated (Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003: 35).

More recently, the ideological model has come to be situated within the emergent literacy perspective. The emergent literacy perspective which deals specifically with literacy in early childhood, has influenced discussion and practice in African development programmes and education for adults and children, in both formal and non-formal situations (Wagner, 2000; Jung & Ouane, 2001: 320–335, Bloch,

2002b). Street's (1984) argument is that autonomous literacy is associated especially with the school whereas ideological literacy is located within the values and beliefs of the community. Bloch (2006) argues that in terms of early literacy learning, the various methods that tend to be broadly called behaviourist, skills-based or phonics methods fall under the autonomous model. This is the hegemonic model in South Africa today – it involves us talking about “spreading literacy” like a force of good, or “eradicating illiteracy” as if it was a disease (Wagner, 2000: 4) or even “breaking the back of illiteracy” as if it were an evil (Asmal, 2001: 3). It is in this account that my study shows how the children's in-school and out-of-school literacy practices encompass autonomous and ideological strands respectively. To further explain the literacy models, Barton (1994) coins two concepts; ‘literacy event’ and ‘literacy practice’, which are discussed in the next section. The next section draws a distinction between literacy events and literacy practices (Street, 1988).

3.7.2 *Literacy events and literacy practices*

In trying to illustrate “what people do with literacy” Barton (1994: 37) coins two concepts; “literacy event” and “literacy practice”. The literacy events and the literacy practices are fundamental concepts in the ideological model. Drawing upon Heath's (1983) work, Barton and Hamilton (1998) differentiate between “literacy events” and “literacy practices”. Barton (1994: 37) describes a literacy event as observable, that is, we can see what people do, such as reading or writing which involves a whole range of other modalities: visualising, talking, performing, playing, and listening and other literacy practices such as common patterns in using reading and writing, situations in which people bring their cultural knowledge. Central to the concept of literacy event are activities where “literacy has a function, the actions that surround the activities and the people that comprise them” (Ivanic, 1998: 63). Barton and Hamilton (2000) describe some literacy events as activities may be repeated and usually linked to routine sequences associated with formal procedures and expectations within social institutions. In my study, examples of literacy events in early childhood classrooms include small group activities, story time, whole class activities, reciting poems or

early morning quick spelling activities which are considered routinised and everyday literacy pedagogical practices. When participating in literacy events people engage in literacy as a social activity illustrated in the literacy practices that they draw on. Barton and Hamilton (1998) also help us understand the link between reading and writing and the social structures in which they are located and shaped. Due to the emphasis on literacy events, those who work within this framework of literacy as social practice tend to focus on print and written texts (Perry, 2012: 54). For example, in illustrating the nature of literacy as a social practice, a study with Sudanese refugees showed that they frequently engaged in literacy events that involved reading the Bible for various purposes (Perry, 2009; 2008), such as following along during a church service, for Bible study classes, or for guiding personal prayer. As social practices these literacy events mirrored the larger domain of the Sudanese refugees' social, spiritual and religious life. As Street (1993) suggests, literacy practices include events as empirical occasions to which literacy is integral and also includes community models of what those events mean, and their ideological underpinnings, placing emphasis on the things that people do with literacy in their everyday life, at home, work or school (Pahl & Roswell, 2006); the Sudanese refugees' practices were shaped by the social institution of the church, with historical and power dimensions (Perry, 2012). This suggests that the literacy practices depend on the ideology of the individual: the feelings, values, attitudes, and the social relationships present from situation to situation (Street, 1995; Barton & Hamilton, 1998). These practices develop individual awareness of discourses of literacy and the way in which they construct the discourse. Since literacies are embedded in social practices, there are many literacies that can be identified within varying social contexts under varying social conditions. Barton (2009: 43) points out the need for educators and educational policy makers to firstly:

[...] understand what people do, their practices; then it is essential to see how people learn; and only then can we turn to questions of how to teach, or how to support learning. Learning does not just take place in classrooms and is not just concerned with methods. The approach requires educators and researchers to look beyond educational settings to vernacular practices and informal learning, and to the other official settings in which literacies play a key role.

In her studies, Dyson (1993, 2003) shows how children from a variety of social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds can draw deeply upon their out-of-school knowledge of non-academic social worlds to negotiate their entry into school literacy. With the help of supportive educators who can help them weave their own stories, interests, and experiences into the school curriculum, they reveal the breadth of their language and sense-making repertoire. Dyson (2003) advocates a curriculum where educators can draw children into understanding and using symbols and resources from their experiences, in school-like ways. Purcell-Gates (2014) presents a similar observation based on her research of literacy in community settings. She argues that if the curriculum does not relate to students' lives outside of school, their education will be meaningless. She argues that the more relevant educators make literacy instruction to learners' lives, the more likely they are to learn better. The other purpose of my study focuses on out-of-school literacy practices discussed in the following section.

3.7.3 Out-of-school literacy practices

In my study I point out that out-of-school literacy practices are not always restricted to the physical spaces outside school but can occur within the physical school boundaries outside the formal classroom context. In her study on in-school and out-of school literacy practices, Maybin (2007), illustrates the heterogeneous configuration of a classroom space where formal (linked with school setting) and informal (linked with home or vernacular setting) literacy practices swap roles, interact with each other and even run parallel to each other such as carrying out an experiment beyond what the educator prescribed and added their own experiments. In a different study, Lenters (2007) describes literacy practices that extend from the family at home to peers at school e.g. discussing novels read at home with peers at school. There is a growing body of recent research aimed at bridging the gap between out-of-school literacies and classroom practice (Moje and O'Brien, 2001; Hull and Schultz, 2002; Street, 2005). There is also research aimed at helping educators to tap 'funds of knowledge' from pupils' communities, in order to enrich and transform these students' classroom experience (Gutierrez, BaquerdanoLopez, Alvarez & Chiu, 1999). Literacy

occurring outside a school context can become a community resource and in such instances “families, local communities and organisations regulate and are regulated by literacy practices” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998: 13). According to Street’s (1984) conceptualisation of literacy as a social practice this would not be possible unless the participants reflect on and, where possible, change or adapt their literacy practices, e.g. children deciding to keep, pass on or discard their first (baby) books. It can be seen that literacy events have been identified as constituents of literacy practices (Barton & Hamilton, 2000: 16). The nature of these social conditions changes within the conditions of textual work (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). These social conditions manifest in the growing role of digital literacy in technologies such as cellular phones (Livingstone, 2004). The present understanding of the concept of digital literacy was first introduced by Paul Glistler (1997). In this study I employ the meaning of ‘digital literacy’ as it denotes the effective use of information communication technology (ICT) exclusively (Bawden, 2008). I will unpack the concept of digital literacy in the following section. This will assist in gaining an insight into how the children in my study navigate their social space with different digital tools.

3.8 Digital literacy perspective

Digital literacy is an umbrella term for a set of social practices that are interwoven with contemporary ‘ways of being’ (Markham, 2004). In conceptualising digital literacy, terms like ‘new literacies’ (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003b), ‘multiliteracies’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) and ‘technoliteracy’ (Marsh, 2004) are used in talking about the ways in which new technologies intersect with changing practices in meaning-making in the contemporary world. The approaches to contemporary literacy offered by work in field of New Literacies Studies (NLS) (Street, 1995, Hamilton, Barton & Ivanic, 1994) are important in theorising digital literacies for young learners. This is where the plural ‘literacies’ is used, rather than the singular ‘literacy’, to recognise the broad range of practices that can be characterised as literate activity. Digital literacy is a new phenomenon in which reading and writing with new technologies is used by children to navigate their social space (Merchant, 2009: 56). According to Barton (2001) it is clear that an increasing number of

everyday activities are now mediated through screen-based literacies. Although print still has a key role to play in many activities, it is hard to ignore the fact that digital literacies have transformed many everyday practices in both informal and formal contexts (Merchant, 2009).

Several studies have explored children's engagement with new media technologies in their lives. In order to conceptualise the context of this study I review some of the studies in digital literacies. Findings reported of a survey undertaken among two and a half and four years old children from working class families in north England revealed that children learnt about grapheme/phoneme relationships from watching television and reading texts on screens of computer games (Marsh, 2004). An important finding from Marsh's (2004) study is that family members model game-playing for the children. In other linked studies involving ITC were carried out by Surtherland-Smith (2002), and Angus, Syder and Surtherland-Smith (2003) and examined four families' engagements with ITC in Australia. The findings from the studies revealed that even children from working class families could use technology to send emails and surfed different sites and used social media such as chatrooms.

In my study, I therefore argue that children in the contemporary world need a new cultural literacy that is "profoundly interdisciplinary" (Garrett-Petts & Lawrence, 1996) and encompassing print and digital literacies. Research has found that digital use has become a world communication and literacy practice phenomena. For instance, about three quarters of the world population have access to cell phones (World Bank, 2016). In the developed world, about 75% of 3-7 year olds and 81% of 5-15 year olds live in a household with a tablet or computer (Ofcom, 2016). The access to these digital gadgets has led to a dramatic rise in digital book reading among parents and children, who are increasingly reading stories using personal technologies such as iPads/ tablets/ smartphones which has seen a rapid increase of technology in early childhood literacy practices (Formby, 2014). Parents in those countries even read bedtime stories from iPads/ tablets/ smartphones. It has to be noted, however, that bedtime/story reading is a

sociocultural practice not common in most South African black communities (please refer to data analysis Chapter 6).

Although there is easy access to digital media in the developing world, the situation in the developing world is different as access to digital media in the home is inequitable. For example, many South African primary schools do not use technology-aided devices for learning and teaching. Many educators lack either access to technology aided devices, competence, confidence or knowledge in using them to harness the potential of digital technologies in the classroom and to promote critical and creative digital literacy skills and knowledge (Flewitt, 2016). Research has shown that children learn best when they are interested in what they are learning, when literacy activities have a recognisable purpose with which they identify, and where there is a degree of choice and collaboration (Flewitt, 2016).

There is, however, a counter argument on benefits of digital literacies. Some key concerns have been raised about digital literacies as being “toxic” (Duch, Fisher, Ensari & Harrington, 2013: 2). Research shows that excessive exposure to technology may result in damaged brain development resulting in anti-social behaviour. Low exposure to TV and computer screens for children under two is highly recommended (Duch, et. al., 2013). The adverse effects of screen-based technology in the early years can induce Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) that discourages a child’s need for real experiences to create new neural circuitry in the brain that becomes intelligence and empathy; “committed protectors of the child’s right to a childhood of imaginative play uninvaded by politicians’ prescriptive curricula and harmful screen” (Open Eye Conference, 2010). The online content the children are consuming is increasingly curated by digital intermediaries, e.g. providers like YouTube and Google (attractive content which rivals traditional broadcasters, and also seen by many children as ensuring access through their sites to trustworthy content). Smaller screens make parental supervision more difficult and the proliferation of devices increases the need for parents to keep up to date with technology e.g. in UK, nine in ten parents of 5-15

year olds mediate their child's use of the Internet in some way but less than one in five parents whose child uses a smartphone or tablet use tools that restrict app installation (Ofcom, 2016). New information technologies (which require skills in managing resources and where cognition is distributed) pose direct challenges to how schooling operationalises learning. These challenges illustrate the deep incompatibilities between schooling and the new technologies (Flewitt, 2016). The other challenge is that, as technology mediators, "the parents of children born today might themselves very much come from a generation that itself had been labelled digital deficient" (Safton-Green, Marsh, Erstad & Flewitt, 2016: 3). To date, policy discourses and curricula across Europe have mainly tended towards an autonomous (Street, 1995) framing of digital literacy, focusing on equipping children with a uniform and universalist set of technical and functional skills to enable them to begin to read and write in digital media (Safton-Green et al., 2016: 14). There has been a similar focus on the need to launch initiatives that will "upskill" educators, parents and care givers so that they in turn can enable young children to develop their own digital literacy competencies. Young children's home lives are becoming increasingly shaped by their engagement with a wide range of new technologies (Marsh, Brooks, Hughes, Ritchie & Roberts, 2005; Rideout, Vandewater & Wartella, 2003). Much of the use of technology is playful in nature. Play as a literacy activity is discussed in the following section.

3.8.1 Play as a literacy activity

The relationship between play and creativity in early childhood has been examined largely from a sociocultural perspective, drawing from the work of Vygotsky (Berk, 1994; Vygotsky, 2004/1930). Vygotsky (2004/1930) views play as crucial to cognitive development and a 'leading activity', leading children on to the acquisition of new skills and/ or knowledge and understanding. Vygotsky's (1978) work has been highly influential in early childhood research as it has been identified as a factor in child development as he believes that play facilitates development of cognitive processes linked to creativity, such as problem-solving and is fundamental to some of the child's greatest achievements. Play has been reported to enhance creative practice in a range of areas such as numeracy,

literacy and the arts (Holmes & Geiger, 2002; Wood & Attfield, 2005). It is in this regard that Roskos and Christie (2011) see play as having the potential to enhance children's literacy. Prinsloo (2004: 292) views play as a practice enabling children to learn, innovate around and reflect on conceptual resources available to them from multiple social domains. In the emergent literacy perspective, play is considered an integral aspect of literacy development as it occurs in both in-school and out-of-school activities. In this section, I present play as a central rhetoric in childhood literacies (Banaji & Burn, 2010). Play in this context can be viewed as a phenomenon that, drawing from play theorists such as Broadhead (2004) and Wood and Attfield (2005), can be defined in numerous ways, but must be seen as an activity which is complex, multi-faceted and context-dependent. When examining the role of play in society, Huizinga (1950), a Dutch cultural historian, argued that it was a basic instinct for people of all ages, not just children. This is evident in contemporary society in relation to the way in which play is central to adult cultural practices, both in terms of play with rules (sports, games) and fantasy play (role-playing, computer games, virtual worlds etc.) (Marsh, 2010). My study is concerned with the latter activities, including role-playing, computer games and virtual worlds. Play is contextualised as a practice almost exclusively associated with early childhood (Marsh, 2010). Vygotsky (2004) argued that play was inherently creative:

We can identify creative processes in children at the very earliest ages, especially in their play. A child who sits astride a stick and pretends to be riding a horse; a little girl who plays with a doll and imagines she is its mother; a boy who in his games becomes a pirate, a soldier, or a sailor, all these children at play represent examples of the most authentic, truest creativity (Vygotsky, 2004/1930: 11).

The creative processes in play are contextualised in creativity. Creativity has been viewed as involving "imaginative processes with outcomes that are original and of value" (Robinson, 2001: 118). The rhetoric of creativity (Banaji & Bum, 2010) in childhood has drawn primarily from the fields of cognitive psychology and arts and traditionally has had little to say about the role of children's culture in promoting creativity (Bruce, 2004). The rising interest over the last two decades in early childhood curricula that have creativity as a central pedagogical concept, such as that of Reggio Emilia, has frequently been related to notions of childhood as a

developmental phase of inherent creativity (Resnick, 2007). As suggested, the early childhood field has focused primarily on creativity with respect to the visual arts, and ignored the other art forms or has drawn from sociocultural traditions to explore creativity in relation to cognitive processes such as 'imagination' (Eckhoff & Urbach, 2008) or 'possibility thinking' (Burnard, Craft, Cremin, Duffy, Hanson, Keene, Haynes, & Burns, 2006), applied across the curriculum. Research that has examined everyday culture in relation to creativity, located largely within the field of Cultural Studies, has normally been undertaken with young people (Willis, 1990).

With this view of play, in my study I primarily focus on creativity; that is, children's everyday productive acts across a diverse range of domains (Marsh, 2010). There is widespread evidence that children's daily encounters with media culture inform their play (Bishop & Curtis, 2001; Marsh, 2008). Children use and adapt media scripts in their play, such as characters from television programmes (Griffiths & Machin, 2003); they parody advertisements and programmes (Grugeon, 2004) and draw on language taken from media in rhymes and songs (Grugeon, 2005). Children's play frequently drawn on media sources in imaginative play, is fantasy play, in which they take on the role of media characters such as superheroes, or socio-dramatic play, in which they act out scenarios observed in everyday life. This type of play is frequently criticised as being imitative rather than creative (Linn, 2008) as it is assumed that children merely replicate the scripts they encounter in the media and are thus simply mimics. Numerous studies outline the originality that underlines this type of play, however, with children adapting characters, storylines and settings in imaginative and creative ways (Bromley, 2004; Marsh, 2006; Wohlwend, 2009). Play is not confined to adapting from media but also engaging with media. Play enables children to practice, learn, innovate around and reflect on the conceptual resources available to them from multiple social domains. In that note, Attewell and Blake (1992) have argued that children use computers for playing games. Gee (2003; 2006) points out the games children play have a greater potential to build new learning systems than learning in school. Several experimental studies have indicated that children's creativity is enhanced

through play (Howard-Jones, Taylor & Sutton, 2002) and children learn from paying games. Play and creativity can therefore be seen to be integral in nature; it would be impossible to conceive of play that is not inherently creative (Marsh, 2010).

3.9 Summary

The literature review was aimed at discussing the various approaches to literacy studies. In the chapter I discussed how my research is framed in the sociocultural perspective which views learning as a social construction. Since my research is framed around the conception of learning as a social construction, the chapter discussed how Lev Vygotsky's (1978) social cultural theory is applicable in theorising the social cultural approach to literacy (Gregory et al., 2004: 7), as it highlights the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition. I find the major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition applicable to my study as it explains how learners acquire literacy within a social context. Vygotsky believes that children learn on two levels: first, through interaction with others, and then integrate into their individual mental structure. I find Vygotsky's suggestion that human development results from a dynamic interaction between individuals and society applicable to my study with regard to the interaction between learners and their peers or the 'knowledgeable other' that could be their family members, friends or educators. Located within Vygotsky's social cultural theory is the sociocultural perspective advocated by Street (1995) who acknowledges ideologies involved in literacy practices, and the cultural and social identities associated with those ideologies.

The chapter also discussed how New Literacy Studies is located within the sociocultural framework (Gee, 1996; Street, 1995; Barton, 1994). This is important to my study as New Literacy Studies essentially contextualises literacy as a social practice. As Lankshear and Knobel (2003a: 2) note, "the New Literacy Studies comprise a new paradigm for looking at literacy, as opposed to the paradigm, based on psychology that was already well established". In this regard, New

Literacy Studies challenge autonomous paradigms of literacy that advocate a one dimensional view of literacy, since there are many literacies (Gee, 1996).

I also discussed Street's (2003b) notion of multiple literacies and how he makes a distinction between 'autonomous' and 'ideological' models of literacy (Street, 1984: 1); and how he draws a distinction between 'literacy events' and 'literacy practices' (Street, 2003b: 5). The literacy practices are located within the multiliteracies approach which advocates multimodal approaches to learning. The chapter also illustrated how Gee (1996) uses the term 'literacies' as a way of distinguishing between multiple discourses used in social contexts, namely: primary and secondary Discourse. The notion of Discourse is based on Bourdieu's notion of habitus (Wilson, 2004). Bourdieu (1991) argues that one acquires a primary discourse through early socialisation in the home and acquires secondary discourses from schools. Gee (2012: 2) argues that we have to appreciate language in its social context, we need to focus not language but on "Discourses", with a capital "D" which include much more than language.

The literature review explained how primary Discourses are located within emergent literacy as they are learnt within a family context even before children are exposed to formal learning. I have shown how conflict between home-based Discourses and the mainstream Discourses of the school develops. According to school-based Discourses, children who are not from the mainstream school culture are considered 'non-standard' (Gee, 2012: 4). Through socialisation, some children acquire secondary Discourses that are relevant to school literacy practices of mainstream culture. In the following chapter I will discuss the research design informing my study and the methodology used to collect data on the Grade 3 learner's literacy practices in a multilingual township.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters (Chapters 2 and 3), I provided the contextual, conceptual and theoretical frameworks for this study. These include the background to the study and the literature review. In this chapter, I position my study by providing a description and explanation of the research design, and the methodology used in the research. The chapter first covers the research design followed by the research methodology. The research design describes the philosophical framework that supports the study, and the methodology describes the methods used in the research. Details on the research sites and participants are also included. A description of the specific qualitative data sources and the data gathering tools (interviews and personal observations), as well as analytical techniques, is provided. Issues of trustworthiness, including validity and reliability of the research, are also addressed in this chapter. Finally, details of ethical issues addressed in the study are described.

4.2 Research design

A research design is defined as a set of guidelines and instructions used by the researcher to make appropriate decisions regarding the research problem (Mouton, 2001; 2010). Yin (2014: 143) views design as “the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions”. Marshall and Rossman (2016) advise that, the researcher should choose the design that has the best chance of answering the research questions. For some, a phenomenological study design may be optimal because of the nature of the participants as well as exploring the lived experiences of others (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). For others, a case study design would be best to identify operational links between events over time (Andrade, 2009; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2014). Further, other researchers might consider ethnography to explore the feelings, beliefs, and meanings of relationships between people as they interact within their culture or as they react to others in response to a

changing phenomenon (Fields & Kafai, 2009). For these reasons, I chose case study design to answer the research questions in this study (please see Section 4.2.3, for further explanation). Research design therefore refers to the overall logic of a particular research project. In reality, research design suggests the theoretical framing, evidence required, methods, and tools needed to undertake a research project. For example, collecting data needs to be systematic and also requires a logical manageable 'design'. Indeed the data collection design is integral to a study's overall logic, and constitutes the procedural guidelines for collecting information. In most cases the research design implies or relies on the chosen research paradigm (Creswell, 2013). This study employs a qualitative interpretive research paradigm as a system of enquiry.

4.2.1 Interpretive research paradigm

It is imperative to position this study among other forms of research. Such positioning is informed by the nature of reality (ontology), and the nature of knowledge (epistemology) (Merriam, 2009). Traditional research paradigms make certain assumptions about reality. Two research paradigms that occupy the research space are positivist and interpretivist. A positivist orientation assumes that reality exists 'out there' and that it is observable, stable and measurable (Merriam, 2009). As evident, capturing a reality that is 'out there' is difficult and impossible. The post-positivists hold the view that researchers should strive to capture reality using multiple methods, such that reality might be approximated (Lichtman, 2006). In contrast to the positivist approach, interpretive research assumes that reality is socially constructed where there is no single, observable reality (Merriam, 2009). Such assumptions present an existence of multiple realities or interpretations of a single event. According to the tenets of the interpretivist paradigm, researchers do not 'find' knowledge but they construct it (Lichtman, 2006). Interpretivists claim that truth is relative phenomena and dependent on one's perspective so it is subject to contestation. Such a claim recognises the importance of the subjective nature of the creation of meaning, but it does not reject objectivity of meaning (Miller & Crabtree, 2005).

As this study is situated in the interpretivist research paradigm, it places emphasis on experience and interpretation. By locating this research within the interpretive paradigm, I seek to understand the “phenomenon and to interpret meaning within the social and cultural context of the natural setting” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 321-322). For this study, it means that I am fundamentally concerned with interpretation of knowledge systems influenced by and interacting with social contexts. In interpretive projects, knowledge systems known as discourses, become key players. The interpretive researcher analyses texts to look for the way in which people make meaning in their lives. This study involved understanding how people interpret texts in particular contexts, in this case, artefacts such as samples of learners’ work and pictures. The main tenet in interpretivism is that research can never be objectively observed from the outside, it must be observed from the inside through the direct experience of people. Consistent with this view, the role of the scientist in the interpretivist paradigm is to “understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011: 29). Researchers in this paradigm seek to understand rather than explain phenomena. Research based on an interpretivist epistemology, where social reality is seen as a set of meanings that are constructed by the individuals who participate in that reality, uses a qualitative research approach (Gall, 2005).

4.2.2 Qualitative research approach

A qualitative research approach was used in this study. This is an umbrella concept that includes several research strategies (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research approach is based on a constructivist paradigm with assumptions that there exist multiple realities where understanding of social phenomena is co-constructed by the researcher and the participant through a naturalistic set of procedures (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In this instance research takes place in natural settings employing a combination of observations, interviews, and document reviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Qualitative researchers studying things in their natural settings attempt to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin,

2011). The qualitative research design as a system of inquiry seeks to build a holistic, largely narrative, description to inform the researcher's understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon (Khan, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). This approach provides rich narrative descriptions of the respondents' perspectives on the construction of the reality of their social world. This approach does "not only see people as a primary data source, but seeks their perceptions" (Mason, 2002: 56), or what Blaikie (2000: 115) calls the 'insider view', rather than imposing an 'outsider view'. According to this approach, other data sources can be used, "for example, texts or objects, but what an interpretivist would want to get out of these would be what they say about or how they are constituted in people's individual or collective meanings" (Mason, 2002: 56). Such a research approach is intended to penetrate to the deeper significance that the subject of the research ascribes to the topic being researched.

In qualitative research, the research questions are formulated to investigate topics in all their complexity (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The research questions are meant to extract the respondents' perceptions in order to direct the respondents' actions, thoughts, and feelings so as to analyse the contexts and narrate the meaning they attach to particular processes, situations and events they describe (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 396). Qualitative research has a unique capacity to generate data that have richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Flick, Von Kardoff & Steinke, 2004: 3; Mason, 2002: 1). It involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter and gives priority to what the data contribute to important research questions or existing information. Qualitative research is characterised by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which (in general) generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis. Qualitative methods emphasise aspects of meaning, process and context: the 'why' and the 'how', rather than the 'how many' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Litoselliti, 2003). The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides

information about the human side of an issue, that is, the often contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals.

Several factors influenced my decision to use the qualitative or interpretive research design in this study. First, the qualitative habit of intimately connecting context with explanation enables the researcher to produce “well-founded cross-contextual generalities, rather than aspiring to more flimsy de-contextual versions” (Mason, 2002: 1). Researchers can generate “cross-contextual generalisation”, which “demonstrates how context and explanation are intimately connected” (Emmel, 2013: 61). This form of generalisation is termed ‘analytic generalisation’ (Polit & Beck, 2010). In analytic generalisation findings extracted from a single case are tested for their resemblance to “other cases and with patterns predicted by previous research and theory” (Shaw & Holland, 2014: 89). Merriam (2009: 343) describes five types of qualitative research: generic, ethnographic, phenomenology, grounded theory and case studies. This research can also be seen as phenomenological. In phenomenological research the “focus would be on the essence or structure of an experience (phenomenon)” (Merriam, 1998: 15). This research is based on the assumption that children’s in-school and out-of-school early childhood literacy practices influence their performance on school based knowledge. In the study, literacy practices of the different children are analysed and compared to identify the essence of the phenomenon. In this study, I mainly used interviewing and observation to collect data. I examined educators’ teaching practices as well as the children’s in-school and out-of-school literacy practices of children in a multilingual township. This was meant to increase my understanding of how educators approach literacy instruction in the foundation phase as well as the relevance of the instruction to the learners’ literacy practices.

To address the complexity of human experience in the qualitative or interpretive tradition, Merriam (2009: 4) suggests the case study as it offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. In this study, the cases are the

children, and the site is the township school, composed of its sociocultural ethos. In the next section I discuss case study methodology.

4.2.3 Case study

In this section, I elucidate the nature and value of the case study and then discuss its theoretical underpinnings (Dyson & Genishi, 2005: 1). Case studies are one of the most frequently used qualitative research methodologies (Yin, 20014). This methodology is mostly used in qualitative research and commonly used in qualitative educational research (Stake, 2005: 200). On the philosophical underpinnings of a case study, both Stake (2005) and Yin (2014) base their approach on a constructivist paradigm. Constructivists claim that truth is relative and dependent on one's perspective. Constructivism is built upon the premise of a social construction of reality (Searle, 2010). This study, therefore, uses a case study approach to explore the early childhood children's literacy practices in a multilingual township. As a case, this study offers an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single functioning unit (i.e., one body of primary school children in the foundation phase) that delineates the investigation (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009: 138) advises that when using the case study approach researchers should consider the desired final product: "a richly descriptive report on the phenomenon under study that affords the reader the vicarious experience of being there". Because expressions of communication require multiple data sources and the context of the classroom cannot be separated from these expressions, the case study approach was well-suited to my study. The use of this approach was motivated by the nature of the questions raised in this study. According to Yin (2014) a case study design should be considered when: 1) the "how" and "why" questions are posed in a study focused on contemporary phenomena within a real-life context; 2) one cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; 3) one wants to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or 4) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context.

I chose the case study for various reasons. Firstly, the case study has the potential to provide great depth in data collection and analysis of the children's in-school and out-of-school literacy practices. Secondly, a case study provides what Stein (2003) terms a way to focus on the specific, the bounded and the unique, using a range of sources. When choosing the case study approach I also considered its advantages. Stake (2005: 443) points out that what makes the case study approach distinct is that it is defined by "interest in an individual case, not the method of enquiry used". He argues that the key feature of a case study is its boundedness and its specificity. Case studies are "about real people and real situations and commonly rely on inductive reasoning to illuminate the reader's understanding of a phenomenon under study" (Willis, 2007: 239). The case study tends to concentrate on a particular, unique case (Simons, 2009), amongst many, in order to illuminate the complexities of 'the one' which appears to be intrinsically interesting to the researcher (Stein, 2003). In this study, I consider the process of working with one grade of children in one primary school within a stipulated time-frame as a 'case' in that it occurs in a particular context and moment which is bounded by time and circumstances (Stein, 2003). The appropriateness of the case study to my work is that it is arguably an important resource for understanding literacy as it occurs in everyday activities (Mallete & Duke, 2004). As Barone (2004: 9) suggested, in the case study approach the researcher can investigate more than one case, so as to study a phenomenon, group, condition or event. It is on this premise that I draw on a case study approach to analyse the literacy practices of five children in different settings. The case in this study constitutes the five children who participated in the study. Jacklin (2001) has pointed out that a case study can be used for the investigation of multi-faceted, naturally occurring phenomena that occur in a certain context, to answer a particular problem. A case study may offer more details about a particular phenomenon. For instance, it may include narrative and a specific description about a particular activity, personal relationship or a group interpretation. The cases discussed in this study are bounded by an investigation into a specific group of children and their literacy practices in school and their homes. Each case study focuses on different ways in which children engage with literacies in an institutionalised space such as a school

and in their private space in their homes. The case studies discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 provide overall contextual accounts of the children's literacy practices in a multilingual township in Johannesburg, South Africa. The accounts describe the aspects of the children's literacy practices and how they promote their literacy development.

Contrary to the strengths of the case study, there is also criticism of this approach. A major criticism of this approach is how much can be generalised from the case to other contexts and examples. Stake (2000: 448) warns that "the purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent the case". This implies that the case study findings cannot be generalised to other social contexts. Second, Yin (2014) says the limitation of a case study approach is that people may think that case study researchers do not follow systematic procedures and may have biased views that probably influence the findings and the conclusions. From my point of view, case study researchers should maintain a neutral position in reporting the facts or at least when triangulating the data to ensure that their claims are supported. Another limitation of case studies is that the researchers are not able to cover all the issues been investigated and offer a *scientific generalisation* because they tend to have limited evidence, and not as much as is the case with quantitative research. In responding to this issue, the researchers may use a multi-case study approach so that their findings will clarify whether there is similarity or a pattern among the cases. The third limitation is that case studies often rely on *subjective data*, such as the participants' statements or the researchers' observations, because most case studies focus on human experiences. Consequently, data will vary based on the participant's descriptions, opinions, and feelings.

Further limitations include certain ethical issues related to a case study. Like other qualitative researchers, most case study researchers collect data from people as participants or *human subjects*. Therefore, it is important for a researcher to be aware of participants' rights, such as keeping the participants' identities and data confidential and be ready if a participant refuses to answer certain questions.

Furthermore, a researcher should be careful in reporting a participant's experience, opinion, or personal view in a way that might offend the participant. In this study, I have used the case study to provide the reader with a richer understanding of the literacy practices of children in a South African township. This study does not claim to be a 'generalisation' of how township children in South Africa practice literacy and fare in systematic evaluations administered by the Department of Basic Education or other bodies. My research needs to be read in the context of an enquiry in a sample before generalisation on a larger scale can be made.

4.3 Research methodology

The methodology used within the qualitative research paradigm must best address the research problem (Denzin, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This is the logic through which a researcher addresses the research questions (Mason, 2002: 30), and gathers data for the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 157). Research methodology encompasses the complete research process: the research approaches, procedures and data-collection or sampling methods used (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 74). Therefore, the aim of research methodology is to understand the processes and not the product of scientific inquiry (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011: 39).

This study followed an interpretive approach to explore, explain and describe the early childhood literacy practices in a multilingual township. Mason (2009) points out that the interpretive approach does not only consider people as primary sources of data but also seeks the meaning and interpretation that people give to their social world. In the interpretive approach "efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand within" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011: 6). According to Flick, Von Kardoff and Steinke (2004: 5), the qualitative research approach "is more open and thereby 'more involved' than other research strategies and forms the starting point for the construction of a grounded theoretical basis." This qualitative research is therefore grounded in a philosophical position that is generally interpretive in the sense that it is

concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced and constituted. The next section describes the research methods employed in the study.

4.3.1 Methods

Methods, as distinct from methodology, refers to at least two categories of research action: that is, data collection and data analysis. Mason (2002: 3) points out that in order to use the above mentioned approaches the researcher “requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting them.” Data collection methods include tools and processes used to collect data, while analytic methods comprise theorised strategies and processes for interpreting this data (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004: 171). The following sections describe the setting, participants, data sources and data collection procedures, data analysis, ethical issues and limitations of the study.

4.3.2 Research setting

In qualitative case studies, description and interpretation of the literacy practices is only possible in context. Any effort to share what is learned from the participants requires an awareness of the context (Merriam, 2009). The literacy practices in this research enquiry are an integral part of the school and home settings where they occur and are best examined within the context of that particular setting. In this study, the events that take place and the experiences of the learners, parents and educators, mirror the literacy practices in a multilingual township context. This section focuses on aspects: the actual physical setting, a school and a home, and the learners in the foundation phase—the case”. It is a “case” contained by time (2013-2016) and place (in a multilingual township in Gauteng Province, South Africa).

Community context:

This research study takes place in Kagiso, a township in the western part of Gauteng Province in South Africa. This township of about 190,000 people is inhabited by mostly multilingual black residents. It was established in 1920 by

former miners and informal settlers from nearby Luipaadvlei. The township falls under Mogale city (formerly known as Krugersdorp). Townships were designated areas for black and coloured people during the Apartheid years under the Group Areas Act 1950. However, these townships still exist today. Based on the 2010 Census, the area surrounding this community has one of the lowest socioeconomic levels in the province with an average monthly disposable income of R50 (approximately US\$4, 20) per household (Statistics South Africa, 2015). The income level provides an indicator of the lifestyle of the community in the area. According to StatsSA (2015), of the total population of the township, approximately 55% of the female and 30% of the male population do not earn any income at all. The low income levels are due to high levels of unemployment and the reliance on government social grants as sources of income.

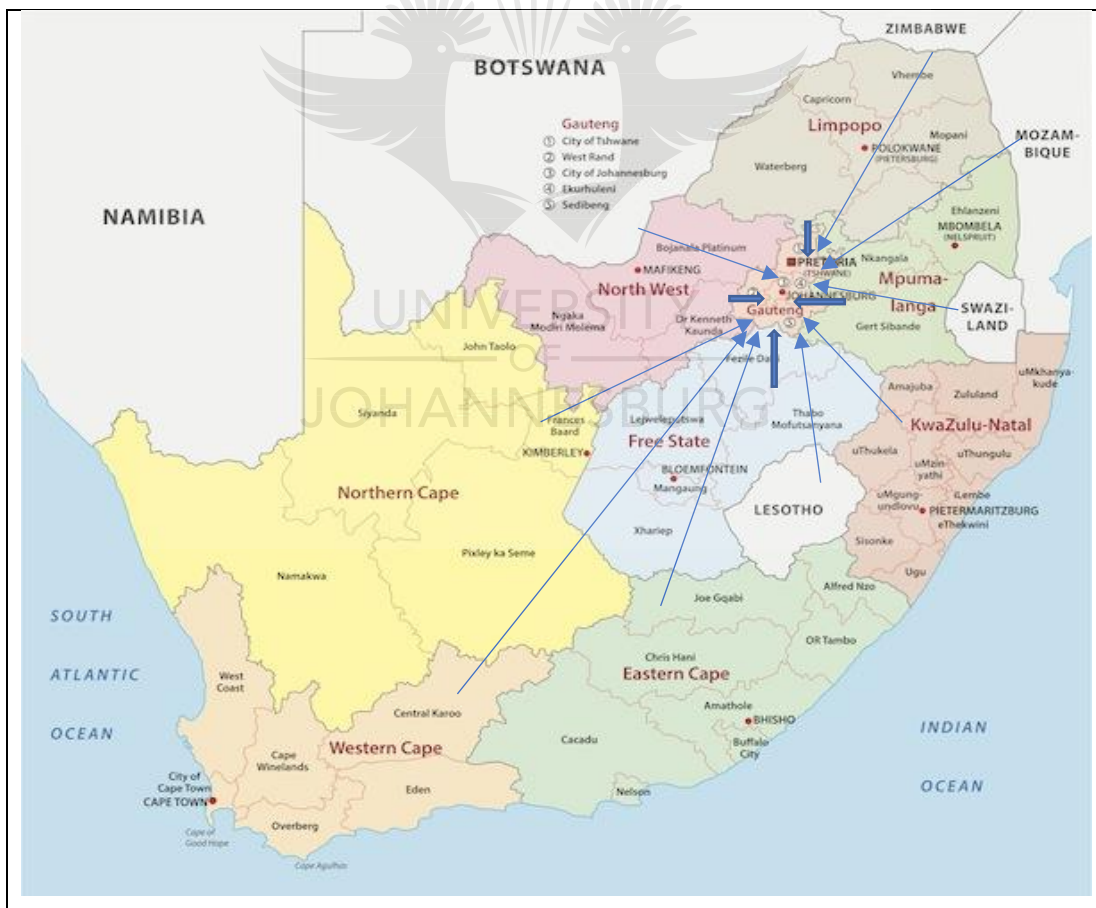


Figure 4.1: Migration trends into Gauteng Province (Source: <http://www.living-in-south-africa.com/provinces-of-south-africa.html> - Accessed 23 March 2014)

Kutlwano Primary School where the research was conducted is located in Gauteng Province which is considered to be South Africa's economic hub. As illustrated in Figure 4.2, Gauteng is surrounded by four provinces namely: Limpopo, Northwest, Free State and Mpumalanga. With the demise of apartheid there has been a remarkable freer migration of South Africans than before between the various provinces (Banda, 2000: 52). In this instance, Gauteng experiences an influx of migrants from other provinces as people seek employment opportunities. Migrants into Gauteng do not only come from the surrounding provinces but come from as far as the Cape provinces; neighbouring countries such as Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, Democratic Republic, Zimbabwe, and other African countries. The migrants from other provinces, in particular, bring into Gauteng different languages that are spoken in their provinces namely: Sepedi, Tsonga and Venda (Limpopo); Setswana (Northwest); Southern (Sotho Free State); Swati and Ndebele (Mpumalanga); Zulu (Kwa-Zulu Natal); and Xhosa and Afrikaans (Cape Provinces). The divergent linguistic distribution in Gauteng townships like Kagiso, in particular, has been a result of this movement of people. This movement of people into Kagiso has resulted it being a multilingual township. The languages spoken in Kagiso Township include Tswana (51.4%), Southern and Northern Sotho (7.2%), Xhosa (13.6%), Tsonga, Venda and others (13%); Zulu (14.5%); Afrikaans and English (0.3%). The racial profile of the population is Black African (99.5%), Coloured (0.4%) and White (0.1%) (StatsSA, 2015). This influx of people into Kagiso seek work in the nearby areas of Krugersdorp, Randfontein, Roodepoort and Chamdor.

Kagiso Township has 9 primary schools, which offer different home languages as determined by the School Governing Body (SGB) in each particular school. The township has four Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) centres, which help people wanting to improve their education. Kagiso also has a library which has a reference section as well as children's section. The Foundation Phase Head of Department at Kutlwano Primary School, Mr Kupe, informed me that the township has more than 50 informal crèches. According to information obtained from the Westrand Social Development Department, there are 45 registered formal Early

Childhood Development Centres (ECDC) or crèches (Department of Social Development, 2016). Formal ECDCs are registered with the Social Development Department and Department of Basic Education as required by the South African government legislation. The Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme dedicated to children between 0-6 years old is monitored by the (Social Development Department). The programme is targeted at crèches. As from 2012, the Westrand Social Development Department has been monitoring all ECD centres to determine the status of their readiness for registration, to check the qualification of care givers and to assist with registering them with the Social Development Department and Department of Basic Education. Registered ECD centres receive a government subsidy of R15 (approximately US\$1.25) per day per child for 264 days (DoSD, 2016).

Kagiso Township has many churches, two shopping malls, banks and ATMs and traffic lights. It also boasts several recreational facilities that include a multipurpose sports centre, which has a cricket pitch, soccer fields, tennis courts and a swimming pool. The health needs of the people in the township are mainly catered for by the local Leratong Hospital. There are six municipal clinics and some doctors operating private practices in the township. Most adults in the township are unemployed and they rely on the government social grants¹⁴ and state pensions. Some of the unemployed people are employed in the Community Work Programme (CWP)¹⁵ in the township and in factories, shops and malls in the surrounding towns of Roodepoort, Krugersdorp, Randfontein and Johannesburg.

Kagiso is described as a busy township that is always interrupted with the noise of mini-bus taxis¹⁶ and other vehicles as residents commute in and out of the township. The bulk of the traffic in this township is on the taxi routes that permeate into various extensions of the township. During the peak hours (7h00-8h00 and 16h30-18h30) heavy traffic can be seen on the R51, Randfontein-

¹⁴ These comprise of the child support grants for all children of destitute parents, mostly single young mothers (children benefit up to age of 16)

¹⁵ A local government works-programme providing employment to residents of a particular area

¹⁶ Commuter mini-buses that ferry commuters from one place to another. They do not have any formal schedule and can stop anywhere

Johannesburg road, which passes through the township to Randfontein, and other townships in the west rand such as Mohlakeng, Kagiso Extensions, Azaadville, Rietvlei, Bekkersdale and Westonaria. The educational and cultural ethos of the community is enhanced not only by the public schools but also by Westcol FET College, a public college with three campuses, two located in Krugersdorp and one in Greenhills.

The township life also comprises a mixture of religious and cultural beliefs found within the community's churches including Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Anglican and various Apostolic Churches such as the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC). The dwellings in the townships are a mixture of clearly laid out sections and a concentration of informal settlements with no or minimum provision for open space. The townships are divided into 'old sections', which comprise of a mixture of formal dwellings and shacks within the same yards. 'Recently developed sections' (less than 15 years old), comprise of the original formal structures, with no backyard settlements. The section or extension of the township where the research was conducted has state-provided houses constructed by the government under its Reconstruction and Development programme (RDP).¹⁷ However, there are also informal settlements (shack dwellings) in some parts of the township. Shacks are makeshift dwellings made from corrugated iron sheets and Masonite. The mushrooming shack dwellings are a result of the high demand for accommodation caused by the massive movement of people into the township. Images 4.1 and 4.2 that follow, show two different types of dwellings found in the township. These images illustrate the socioeconomic disparities found in the township.

¹⁷ RDP is a South African socio-economic policy framework implemented by the African National Congress (ANC) government in 1994 in order to alleviate poverty and address the massive shortfalls in social services by providing cheap housing for the poor low income earners.



Image 4.1: Some modest houses in Kagiso



Image 4.2: Informal settlement in Kagiso

Image 4.1 shows modest houses in Kagiso. These four roomed houses were built by the municipality. Residents who could afford renovated the houses similar to those in the image. Image 4.2 on the other hand illustrates the squalid conditions that some of the residents live shack dwellings Shacks are makeshift dwellings made from corrugated iron sheets and Masonite or any material that the residents can come across such as plastic sheets or planks.

School context:

Kutlwano Primary School, where the research participants are drawn from, is one of the 9 primary schools located in Kagiso Township. The school was opened in 2005. It is one of the schools built in the township after South Africa's 1994 democracy. Kutlwano Primary school has 27 brick classrooms and 10 mobile asbestos classrooms. Image 4.3 that follows, provides an outlook of the school buildings.



Image 4.3: Kutlwano Primary School buildings

The staff at Kutlwano Primary School comprises 54 educators and 12 support staff (all of them are black). The former include the principal, two deputy principals, and 51 educators including Heads of Departments (HODs). Only 10 (eighteen percent) of the school's teaching staff hold teaching degrees, and represent an average of ten years of teaching experience. Like most primary schools in South African, some classes at Kutlwano Primary school are overcrowded, with some extremely large classes exceeding 60 learners per class (please see the following image, Image 4.4)



Image 4.4: Overcrowding in the classroom

Image 4.4 illustrates the overcrowding in classrooms. Notes that children's faces are blurred for ethical reasons. Learners are seated in threes at desks meant for one learner. Overcrowding is a problem in most township and rural schools in South Africa. Theoretically, the teacher-pupil ratio in South African public schools is supposed to be 35:1 but in reality it could be more than 60:1 (Spaull, 2016), in some township and rural schools. Generally, in the South African context there has been little attention paid to class sizes, especially class sizes in the Foundation Phase. The problem of class size has been a contentious issue in the South African education system as educationists argue that large classes prevent educators from according learners individual attention. The post-provisioning norms of 2002 (Government Gazette 24077) indicate that the ideal maximum class size for Grades R–4 is 35, whilst it is 40 for Grades 5–6 and 37 for Grades 7–9 (Spaull, 2016). Despite these government guidelines, considerable inter-provincial differences in class sizes exist. In the Western Cape only about 3% of Grades 1–3 learners are in very large classes of 46 learners or more per class. However, in provinces like Limpopo or the Eastern Cape about 41% of Grade 1–3 learners are in very large classes of 60 or more learners. Both Gauteng and Mpumalanga have

relatively high numbers of overcrowded classes, at 33% (Spaull, 2016). At Kutlwano Primary, two of the five Grade 3 classes were over-crowded, with more than 50 learners in each class. The overcrowding of learners in the classrooms was partly caused by the shortage of classrooms and mainly by the fact that the school teaches in languages mostly spoken by the majority of children from the township. Kutlwano Primary School is the only primary school in this section of Kagiso Township offering Setswana, which is the most spoken language in the township. The school's 2013 enrolment was more than 1000 learners constituting 411 learners in Grades R-3 (Foundation Phase) and 500 learners in Grades 4-6 (Intermediate Phase) and 200 in Grade 7 (Senior Phase). The enrolment for Grade R during the 2013 school year was 197 learners. The learner population in this primary school comprises only black children from multilingual backgrounds. This learner population reflects diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of IsiXhosa, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, IsiZulu, Sesotho and Setswana, but only Setswana and IsiZulu are the Languages of Teaching and Learning (LoLT) in the Foundation Phase (Grades R-3). In the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-7) Setswana, IsiXhosa and IsiZulu are offered as First Languages although the LoLT is English.

The district in which the school is located, received a grant from the Department of Basic Education for the 2011-2012 school year to implement a State Reading Initiative. The provision of the grant was precipitated by the school's poor results in literacy and numeracy in Annual National Assessments. The reading initiative was monitored by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) until the end of 2012 when the grant ended. Following the end of the State provision of the reading grant, the school continued to fund the reading initiative with money from the voluntary R100 (approximately US\$8, 33) school levy paid by parents who were willing to pay. It has to be noted that Kutlwano is a 'no-fee' primary school which means that learners are not required to pay any tuition fees. The learners are exempted from paying school fees because most of their parents or guardians cannot afford to pay as they have no source of income or earning below the stipulated minimum amount or they rely on the state grants. Like most of the children from poor families, many children in this school go to school without

having breakfast. About seventy percent of the learners in the school are fed through the National Schools Nutrition Programme (NSNP), which is one of the government's initiatives to alleviate poverty and the harsh economic conditions prevalent in the township and rural schools in the whole of South Africa. However, there is noted tension between the focus on poverty and lack of resources and the neat, well-kept spaces portrayed in the images captured in the classrooms. The images show neatly dressed learners with sufficient resources on their desks. Although some plastic chairs showed signs of wear and tear, each learner was observed to be seated at desks in a brick classroom. What does appear to be lacking is printed, textual material displayed on walls. Conclusions can therefore be made that the low literacy levels in the school cannot be attributed solely to poverty. Findings discussed later in Chapter 5, suggest that low literacy has more to do with systematic shortcomings, such as curriculum and pedagogy, than socioeconomic factors.

Literacy instruction has been of concern at Kutlwano Primary School due to a strategic move the school made to meet the Annual National Assessment (ANA) standardised assessments bench-mark of more than 60% pass in literacy and mathematics. According to the requirements of the ANA, the Grade 3 learners' competence in literacy and numeracy is monitored through standardised tests. For learners in the Foundation Phase to be promoted to the next grade, they must attain a level 4 (50-59%) score in the Home Language (Setswana or IsiXhosa or IsiZulu). Although test scores showed an improvement in the learners' reading skills over the past three years, the school still remains at risk of being labelled a poorly performing school (PPS) in need of district and government intervention. The school is included in the Gauteng Department of Education's (GDE) Gauteng Province Literacy and Mathematics Support (GPLMS) programme. Under the auspices of this programme, schools in this category receive coaching, lesson plans, charts and instruction manuals to promote uniform systematic classroom instruction. A literacy team at the school, comprising of Foundation Phase educators, was chaired by a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) literacy volunteer and it met every Friday afternoon to discuss literacy intervention

strategies. The team collected and analysed literacy progress data gathered from all the Grade 3 classes. The team members made decisions based on the data and then followed the literacy volunteer's directives.

Purposive sampling:

Sampling of the research sites and participants in this study was by way of purposive sampling (Merriam, 2009). Purposive sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002). This sampling is a technique mainly used in naturalistic inquiry studies, and it is described "as selecting units (e.g. individuals, groups of individuals, or institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions" (Teddlie & Yu, 2007: 77). According to Leedeey and Omrod (2005: 150) purposive sampling involves selecting a smaller sample from the larger population group, in order to estimate or predict the prevalence of an unknown piece of information or situation within the larger group. Purposive sampling helps the researcher focus on key informants, who are particularly knowledgeable of the issues under investigation (Schutt, 2006), because it allows decisions to be made about the selection of participants (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2010; Bernard, 2006). In addition, it allows the researcher to decide why she or he wants to use a specific category of informants in the study (Bernard, 2006), and it provides greater in-depth findings than other probability samplings methods (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Samples for qualitative inquiry are generally assumed to be selected purposefully in order to yield cases that are "information rich" (Patton, 2002: 230). Babbie (2005: 163) labels the sampling process as purposive when it aims at producing "insight and depth understanding" in relation to the population of interest.

Purposive sampling was suitable for this study because it was meant to select the participants who would best answer the main research question (Creswell, 2011), which in this case is: "What are learners' out-of-school literacy practices and how do they contribute to their school literacy practices?" This sampling method was

chosen because it can ensure that all the key constituencies of relevance to the subject matter are covered (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The sample of this study is a representation of a wider population and the researcher does not claim that what is true for the convenience sample is also true for the wider population (Punch, 2009). The research sites comprise the school participants attend and the township in which the children live. Data was collected at the learners' homes and the school. The school, as one of the sites, was sampled on the premise of its multilingual mode of instruction as three African languages are used as medium of instruction in the foundation phase. My acquaintance with the deputy principal of the school made it easy for me to gain easy access to the site. The township was sampled as the other site because part of the data collection occurred at the children's families and homes. The selection of the participants in this study was done through purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling, also called judgment sampling, is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) note the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner. From a population of 236 learners in five Grade 3 classes at Kutlwano Primary School, ten learners responded to the call to participate in the study and they were initially identified as potential participants. They were chosen as participants in the study as they had spent two years in the phase which meant that they could be a viable source of data for this study. These ten learners were aged between eight and nine years old. The ten learners were subsequently reduced to a sample of five participants. The sampling of the five learners was based on their parents giving them consent to participate; and their parents' willingness to also participate in the study. In addition, these parents were selected because of their availability. The five educators who participated in the study were selected because they were teaching Grade 3, which is the foundation

phase on which this study is based. They also taught classes in which the learners who participated in this study were attending. The two Gauteng Department of Education District officials who participated in this study were chosen because they were in charge of implementing of the Gauteng Province Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS). Both the educators and the District officials could be viable sources of data as they were individuals especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Through triangulation of data, the five learners together with their parents; the five educators; and the two district officials were identified as potential cases that could provide in-depth data. All participants involved in the study have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities. In the following section, I present short portraits of all the participants.

4.3.3 Research participants

In the following subsections, I present the pen portraits of the participants, starting with educators and Gauteng Department of Education officials; followed by the learners; and then the parents.

4.3.3.1 Educators and GDE officials

The newly appointed Foundation Phase Head of Department (HoD), Mr Kupe, first introduced me to the four third-grade educators, Ms Fakude, Ms Dube, Ms Hamba and Miss Ms Tafane. Mr Kupe also taught one of the Grade 3 classes. These five educators constituted part of research participants. Over the nine-month period, I observed the five educators' classes which the learner participants attended. In order to gain insight into the strategy underlining the pedagogical approach in the teaching of literacy in the foundation, I also included two GDE officials responsible for the implementation of the Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS). The following table, Table 4.1 presents a profile of the five educators and the two GDE officials.

Name	Qualifications	Total Teaching Experience	Teaching Experience in Foundation Phase
Educators			
Ms Hamba	Diploma	25	25
Ms Dube	Diploma	22	5
Ms Fakude	Certificate	10	4
Ms Tafane	Diploma	10	8
Mr Kupe (HoD)	Diploma + B. Ed.	15	10
GDE officials			
Ms Thwala	Diploma + B. Ed.	9	4
Mr Nunu	Diploma + BA	13	0

Table 4.1: Profile of educators and GDE officials

Ms Hamba:

Ms Hamba is in her early fifties. Learners in her class are well-disciplined. When she introduces me to them, they stand up quickly and greet me in unison. Ms Hamba has a loud authoritative voice which seems to have a positive effect on the levels of discipline in her class. In her class, learners who do not do their homework or misbehave are punished. She makes them do their school work while kneeling or squatting on the floor for the entire 30 minutes of the lesson.

Ms Dube:

Ms Dube, always has her tea and lunch in her classroom so that she can be available to assist her learners outside her formal teaching time. She is both an educator and a parent-participant in the study. Ms Dube is the parent of Mashudu, a Grade 3 learner, who is a participant in this study. Although some of Ms Dube's colleagues have reservations on the quality of teaching and learning in the school, Ms Dube seems to have no problem with her daughter attending the school. Unlike other parent-participants who are working class, Ms Dube falls within the middle class. Ms Dube's classroom walls are also decorated with charts, vocabulary cards, and samples of her learners' best work. She informed me that the vocabulary cards helped her learners practise reading of different words in their spare time.

Ms Fakude:

Ms Fakude is a middle aged educator with 20 years of teaching experience in the foundation phase. She is from Kwa-Zulu Natal and is new at the school. Ms Fakude teaches one of the two Zulu medium Grade 3 classes. She prefers to be interviewed in IsiZulu. Ms Fakude is in the School Development Team (SDT), which oversees the performance appraisal of educators within the Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS). The main function of the SDT is to provide learning support to learners and recommend learners for promotion to the next grade or retention in their current grade, based on the learner's competence in literacy and mathematics. The function of the IQMS is to ensure fair quality assurance for educator appraisal. Ms Fakude indicates that she volunteered to participate on the school reading programme, which, in her view is meant to support less experienced educators teach reading better.

Ms Tafane:

Ms Tafane is the only educator with a certificate in education. A certificate is considered to be lower in terms of curriculum coverage when compared to a diploma although both qualifications may be attained after three years of study. Ms Tafane is a young educator in her early 30s and she is a critical of the current education system. She is very apprehensive of GPLMS and ANA which in her view are teaching approaches or policies that 'suppress' creativity in learning and teaching. She indicates that although her teaching approach is guided by the GPLMS, she tries to blend her ideas to make teaching exciting. Ms Tafane likes reading fashion magazines and she gives some of them to her learners to read or cut pictures. She encourages her learners to use pictures from magazines or newspapers to illustrate some concepts in their school work. She prefers having learners come to her table so that she can check their work.

Mr Kupe:

Mr Kupe is the Foundation Phase Head of Department (HoD) at the school and he also teaches one of the Grade 3 classes. He is younger than the two older female educators in his department. Because of his duties as HoD, he is not often in his

classroom as he has to attend to numerous administrative duties either in the school office or at the GDE district offices. When he is absent his class is divided amongst the four educators in the grade. He is also the literacy coordinator in the school. Mr Kupe has been teaching the third grade for more than 10 years. He was one of 10 educators in the school with a teaching qualification at degree level.

Ms Thwala:

Ms Thwala is a Foundation Phase District official in charge of the GPLMS. She displayed a passion for her job and answered all the interview questions enthusiastically. During the time I spent with her, she was constantly on the phone, providing assistance to educators in her cluster.

Mr Nunu:

Mr Nunu was the other GDE official that I interviewed. Like Ms Thwala, Mr Nunu had a very busy work schedule. He had more than 20 schools that he served. Mr Nunu conducted development workshops for the Foundation Phase educators. Every fortnight, he visited the schools in his cluster to either deliver learning material or to offer educators support and guidelines in implementing GPLMS. He preferred to be interviewed at his home on a Sunday afternoon.

4.3.3.2 The learners:

This section presents a short introduction to the five Grade three learners that were chosen to participate in the study. These learners were in five different third-grade classes at Kutlwano Primary School in the 2013 school year. I chose a small sample of children for two reasons. First, the children were part of larger sample consisting five educators and two GDE officials; and five parents. Austin and Sutton (2014) point out that the number of participants is dependent on the richness of the data so these five children have a potential of presenting interesting cases that could address the research questions of the study. Over the course of the first school term, I collected data from each of the five learners. Although only five learners were selected as central participants in this research, their classmates might be present in the study if they contributed in some form to the relevant participants or research findings. The five learners were Thandi, Lindi, Tumelo,

Katlego and Mashudu. In the following table, Table 4.2, I present the profile of the learner participants:

Learner's name	Gender	Age in years	Parent(s)/guardian & occupation	Home Language	School language of instruction
Thandi	Female	9	Aunt/retail clerk	IsiZulu	Setswana
Lindi	Female	9	Grandmother/ Unemployed	IsiZulu	IsiZulu
Tumelo	Female	9	Mother/Call-centre agent & father/ Factory worker	Setswana	Setswana
Katlego	Male	8 ½	Mother/Self-employed	Setswana	Setswana
Mashudu	Female	9	Mother/Educator	Venda/ Setswana	Setswana

Table 4.2: Profile of learners

Table 4.2 illustrates that five learners chosen to participate in the study. The biographical data of these learners was collected through a questionnaire completed by their parents or guardians. These learners are from diverse language backgrounds. The Tswana-speaking children are the two girls, Lebo and Tumelo and one boy, Katlego. The Zulu-speaking children are the two girls, Linda and Thandi. Only one girl, Mashudu, is bilingual – Venda/Tswana-speaking. The five children can speak or understand Setswana, which is one of the languages used as medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase and also widely spoken in the township. All the five children can also comprehend English at different levels of competence. They can also speak either IsiXhosa or isiZulu with their friends. Brief pen portraits of the children are provided the following paragraphs.

Thandi:

Thandi is a soft-spoken intelligent girl. She is an orphan and lives with her aunt and grandmother who are her guardians. Thandi's home is a three-room, Rural Development Programme (RDP) house. There are two corrugated iron back-yard rooms in the yard, one of which is used by Thandi's uncle, Muzi. Although, there is a television set in Thandi's home, they only watch the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) channels since her guardians cannot afford the pay for satellite TV (DSTV) channels. Thandi does her homework before going to play with her

friends. She is in a Setswana class although her home-language is IsiZulu. Thandi is passionate about drawing and she indicated to me that she aspires to be a fashion designer. Everyone in her home seems interested in literacy development. Her aunt has completed an auxiliary nursing course. Thandi's grandmother also has a passion for education as she was attending an adult literacy programme at the time of the study. On one of my visits to Thandi's home, her grandmother proudly showed me a certificate of attendance that she received for attending Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) literacy classes.

Lindi:

Lindi is a very outspoken girl whose character is opposite to that of her reserved twin sister Linda. She is in a Zulu first language class. Lindi usually dominates most IsiZulu class discussions. As she is originally from KwaZulu-Natal, which is a predominantly Zulu-speaking province, her Zulu accent and pronunciation of IsiZulu is considered 'standard' by her educator. Lindi and her sister Linda seem to be admired by their classmates for their eloquent IsiZulu. Their educator always asks them to read most of the Zulu texts during lessons. The educator emphasises that the class should pay attention to the way Lindi and Linda pronounce IsiZulu words. Lindi and her sister live with their grandmother in a 'backroom'¹⁸ that they share with two young cousins and one older cousin who is a student at a Further Education and Training (FET) college. Their grandmother is Xhosa-speaking. After the death of their parents, Lindi and her sister Linda came from KwaZulu-Natal to live in Gauteng with their maternal grandmother who is originally from the Eastern Cape. A devoted member of the Twelve Apostles Church, Lindi reads the bible aloud to the congregation in her church during service. During my interview with her aunt (12 August 2013) she remarks with admiration, "*Lengane inesiphiwo sokufunda ibhayibheli*" [This child has a gift in bible reading]. Lindi is one of the few young people in her church who help the 'uneducated' adults with bible reading.

¹⁸ A cottage-like dwelling erected at the back of the main house.

Tumelo:

Tumelo is a Setswana-speaking girl from Rustenburg. It is her first year in the school. She has been living in Rustenburg with her grandmother. Rustenburg is a predominantly Tswana-speaking area in the North West Province of South Africa. Tumelo's classmates always chuckle when she speaks Setswana which sounds different from the township Setswana lingua franca spoken in their township. She is a reserved but intelligent girl. Whenever her class is given Setswana vocabulary work, her peers seek her assistance with difficult words. She lives in a two-room shack with her parents, two young brothers aged 7 and 2 years old, and her 22 year-old aunt who has recently come from Mafikeng, North West Province, to look for a job in Gauteng. Tumelo is the eldest of the three children. Her mother is a call centre agent and her father is a general worker in a factory in the local industrial area. Both her parents are rarely at home. Tumelo and her sibling who is in Grade 2, are looked after by their aunt, while the youngest sibling goes to a local crèche.

Katlego:

Katlego is a Setswana-speaking boy who prefers using Setswana in all my conversations with him. Although Katlego is soft-spoken, he is a critical thinker with a passion for computer games and drawing. He likes mathematics and always gives the correct answers during mathematics lessons. However, his performance in English is weak. Katlego lives in his grandparents' house with his single mother, aunt and two cousins. His grandparents are pensioners who appear to be living off their pension well. Katlego's home is a modest face-brick house different from the other RDP houses in the township. It is located near the school which is one of the research sites. The house is well-furnished and Katlego's family can afford the pay-per view digital satellite television (DSTV) channels. His grandparents bought Katlego a PlayStation and some computer games. Katlego is fascinated by technology and he uses his cellular mobile phone to access games and information that he needs for his homework and general knowledge.

Mashudu:

Mashudu lives with her mother, Ms Dube, who is an educator at the school where this study takes place. Ms Dube teaches the same grade that Mashudu is in. Mashudu has a mixed-language background. Her father is Venda-speaking and her mother is Tswana-speaking. Mashudu is caught in a 'battle' of languages. She speaks Setswana with her mother. Ms Dube and Mashudu's father do not live together. When Mashudu visits her father, he insists that she speak Venda with him. Mashudu likes reading and watching cartoons on TV. She has a passion for cell-phone games and always plays those with her cousin. She also uses her cellular-phone for educational purposes. She is exposed to a lot of reading material provided by her mother.

4.3.3.3 The parents

The parents who participated in this study also consented to having their children participate in the study. I conducted interviews with them in locations of their choice and in a language they preferred as I could speak these languages. In this section I present pen portraits of the parent participants.

Ms Zungu:

Ms Zungu is Thandi's aunt. As Thandi was an orphan, she is Thandi's guardian. Ms Zungu has high school education and a qualification in hospital auxiliary service which involves assisting patients in hospitals. I first meet Ms Zungu on a Saturday after having phoned her during the week to arrange an interview with her. Ms Zungu is a welcoming respondent who speaks freely about her background and gives me insight into Thandi's life and a detailed description of the activities that she engages in at home. She seems so interested in her child, Mpho's education, including that of Thandi, her adopted child. She highlights the challenges that her children face at school and outlines the nature of assistance she renders them. Mrs Zungu is Zulu speaking and prefers having the interview in Zulu. As the language of communication in her house is IsiZulu, she indicates that her children experience some challenges at school as they are taught in languages different

from their home language. For example, Mpho is in an IsiXhosa class, while Thandi's is a Setswana class.

Ms Gagu:

Ms Gagu is Lindi's grandmother. She is the guardian of Lindi and her twin sister Linda. Although Lindi, is Zulu-speaking, Ms Gagu is Xhosa-speaking, originally from the Eastern Cape. When Lindi's parents died in Kwa-Zulu Natal, she had to come to live with her grandmother, Ms Gagu. A staunch member of the Twelve Apostles' church, Ms Gagu insists that Lindi and Linda attend church service regularly. She is very proud that Lindi reads the bible at church. Ms Gagu is unemployed and raises Lindi and Linda, together with the other children in her care, through her old age pension and the government child grant that the children got every month.

Mr and Mrs Miya:

Mr and Mrs Miya are Tumelo's parents. Mr Miya is Xhosa speaking while his wife is Tswana speaking. In his home, he prefers using Setswana with his family. He is a general worker in a factory in the local industrial area. Mr Miya is rarely at home as he has to leave early for work. On week days he usually leaves for work when his children are still asleep and returns when they are already in bed. His wife, Ms Miya, also works long hours and is rarely at home except on days when she is off from work. Whenever she is at home she spends much of her time doing household chores and taking care of her two-year-old son whom she leaves at an informal crèche when she goes to work. She is part-time student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) where she is studying towards a Bachelor of Education degree. Mrs Miya uses her spare-time time on her studies. On the other hand, Mr Miya actively participates in the affairs of the school where this study is conducted, where he is the chairperson of School Governing Body (SGB). Mr Miya is a very opinionated leader and he speaks his mind about the shortcomings of the educators and administrators at the school. He is also doing his distance-learning studies in Theology at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Mr Miya dedicates his spare time to his family, his part-time Theology Studies and the affairs of the

SGB. He indicated that he is an avid reader and, together with his wife, they encourage Tumelo to read at least one book every week.

Ms Teffo:

Ms Teffo is Katlego's mother. She is a young single mother, living with her parents in their house. During my interviews with her, she always insisted that I address her by her first name, Tumi. Although, Ms Teffo completed high school she does not have a professional career. She is a self-employed hair dresser. Her clients are usually the people in her neighbourhood. She openly gives me insight into Katlego's performance at school and the activities he engages in at home. Although she bought Katlego some computer games and a PlayStation, she openly expresses her dislike for technology which she claims distracts children in their homework.

Ms Dube:

Ms Dube is both an educator and parent-participant in this study. She is Mashudu's mother. Ms Dube is Tswana-speaking while Mashudu's father, with whom she is not living, is Venda-speaking. She always insists that Mashudu should use Setswana. Although she prefers the interview questions in English, she answers in Setswana. Ms Dube complains that her work as an educator is made difficult by parents who are not keen on participating in their children's school work such as assisting them with homework. She is keen on assisting her child to read better and provides her child with a lot of reading books. All the participants presented in this section form part of the data collection sources described in the next section.

4.3.4 Data collection sources and procedures

To address the research questions within a case study research design, the data were obtained through the use of multiple sources. Gathering contextual material from multiple sources was meant to provide an in-depth picture of the case. Through the use of multiple data collection methods, I hoped to triangulate the data in order to enhance the validity of this study. The following table, Table 4.3, shows the sources of data collected in this study over a 10 month period.

Data source	Date	Location	Duration
Fieldnotes	Feb-Nov 2013	3rd grade class	1 x a week
	Feb-Nov 2013	Learner's out-of-school observation	2 x a week
	Mar-Sept 2013	School literacy meetings	1 x fortnight
Semi-structured interviews	Aug-Oct 2013	Mrs Ms Hamba (educator)	2 x interview/30 mins
		Ms Fakude (educator)	2 x interview/30 mins
		Ms Dube (educator)	2 x interview/30 mins
		Ms Tafane (educator)	2 x interview/30 mins
		Mr Kupe (HOD)	2 x interview/30 mins
Semi-structured interviews	Nov- 2013	Ms Zungu (guardian)	2 x interview/60 mins
	Nov-2013	Ms Teffo (mother)	2 x interview/60 mins
	Nov-2013	Ms Dube (educator & mother)	2 x interview/60 mins
	Dec-2013	Mr Miya (father)	2 x interview/60 mins
	Dec-2013	Ms Gagu (mother)	2 x interview/60 mins
Semi-structured interviews	Sep-2013	District official 1	1 x interview/60 mins
	Sep-2013	District official 2	1 x interview/60 mins
Artefacts	Every visit	School/classroom/home	Every visit
Lesson audios	Mar-Sept 2013		1 X a week
Pictures	Every visit		On-going
Policy documents			On-going
Follow up visits	2014-2016	Ms Fakude	2 X 2015
Follow up visits	2014-2016	Mr Kupe (HOD)	3 X 2014-2015

Table 4.3: Summary of data sources and collection frequency

As illustrated in Table 4.3, data were mainly collected through observations of classroom activities; learners' out-of-school literacy practices, during my visits to their homes; and semi-structured interviews with educators, parents and district officials. I collected data for each of the five learners over the course of the school year. This research study took place over 10 months of the school year (February to November, 2013). A normal school year in South Africa is from January to

December. I did not include January and December because the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) guidelines on research conducted in schools stipulate that no research can be conducted in its schools during those months (Gauteng Department of Education, 2012a). I visited the school once a week for two to three hours per session as agreed with the Foundation Phase Head of Department. During each visit, I spent between 30 to 60 minutes in each of the five Foundation Phase classrooms. During my weekly visits to the school, the time I spent either in the classrooms or conducting interviews or in the playgrounds over the school year gave me a comprehensive overview of the educators and the children in the third grade including their literacy practices and activities. I attended the Friday weekly literacy plenary meetings every fortnight and I also attended the Monday weekly Gauteng Province Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS) professional development meetings twice. Attendance at the meetings gave me the opportunity to learn about literacy instruction the Gauteng Department prescribed to the classroom educators in the Foundation Phase (Grade R-3). In addition, I attended debate sessions between different Grade 3 learners in the school. I also visited afternoon classes which exposed me to the different literacy practices in the school. These multiple forms of data allowed me to gain insight into the complexities of literacy events and practices in the third grade classroom from the perspectives of educators, learners, parents, and education officials. The multiple forms of data were collected through qualitative methods. Qualitative methods of data collection included, non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and artefacts and documents.

4.3.4.1 Non-participant observation

The collection of some of the data took place through non-participant observation. As the key methodological data collection approach, non-participant observation is mostly used in ethnography. It is described as a part of the broader qualitative research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), where the researcher serves as the primary instrument for observing and collecting data (Creswell, 2007). As a method of qualitative research, non-participant observation is recognised as appropriate for gathering data on interactions and relationships

through the recording of “behaviours, conversations, activities, actions, interpersonal interactions, organization or community processes or any other aspect of observable human experience” (Patton, 2002: 193). Non-participant observation, also referred to as naturalistic or direct observation, involves the researcher carefully watching participants or phenomena without actively participating in the activity being observed (Maitlis & Liu, 2010). Williams (2008) defines it as a relatively unobtrusive qualitative research design for gathering primary data about some aspects of the social world without interacting directly with its participants. According to Sobowale (2008) in non-participant observation, the researcher detaches him/herself from the event s/he is watching. The researcher makes observations from a distance and is not involved or engaged in the activity as compared to the participant observation researcher. Because the participant observer watches a situation from a detached position, s/he “adopts a passive, non-intrusive role” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011: 459), whereby the researcher observes but does not “manipulate nor stimulate” those being observed (Punch, 2009: 154). In this way, using non-participant observation as a research method enables the researcher to enter the world of the people he or she wishes to study (Wolcott, 2008), without intruding. As I was collecting observational data, I passively observed every episode with minimum disruption of the field (Saville-Troike, 2003: 98). Since I did not use video-recording, observation methods were useful as they provided me with ways to “check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check how much time is spent on various activities” (Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001). In this regard, DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 8) see observation as been able to improve the quality of data collection and interpretation, and facilitate the development of new research questions or hypotheses. Non-participant observation allows researchers to check definitions of terms that participants use in interviews, observe events that informants may be unable or unwilling to share when doing so would be impolitic, impolite, or insensitive, and observe situations informants have described in interviews, thereby making them aware of distortions or inaccuracies in description provided by those informants (Marshall & Rosman, 2006). Although this data collecting

technique is beneficial it also has limitations. Its major limitation is that too much may be going on that it becomes too difficult to observe everything (Walliman, 2016).

In this study, non-participant observation happened in two phases reflecting the context of my study. The first phase of non-participant observation took place in the five Grade 3 classrooms from February 2013. It started on the sixth week of the school term and extended into the last week of the third term in September, 2013. The purpose of this phase was to gain access into the third grade classes and observe the literacy practices enacted by the learners and educators. My level of involvement was only confined to the observation of classroom practices involving both learners and educators. The initial focus of my observations was on the educators because I wanted to understand how they mapped the literacy practices in their classrooms. I initially wanted to learn classroom routines, get to know the children, and become a part of the classroom. My focus was on the focal learners' interactional patterns with their educators and their peers within the classroom. The observations of the literacy practices in the classrooms took place at various times on each particular visit. Observations of the educators' instructional practices and communications with their learners were recorded through fieldnotes, audiotapes and photographs. I chose to audio record the classroom practices instead of video recording them because in my first video recording, I realised that some learners were distracted and I was concerned that that would disturb the lessons. I discarded that video recorded data and arranged another class visit on a different day. Although audio-recording may be useful, the body language of participants and how they interact can be missed (Austin & Sutton, 2014). In addition to the audio records of lessons, I took notes on how the educators and learners used the learning and teaching resources such as the textbooks, work sheets and flash cards. The main focus of my classroom visits was the recording of class lessons. The classroom audio recording as a source of data was complemented with classroom observational notes.

The second phase of observations happened on home visits where I observed the home activities and children's play. The purpose of the home visits was to gain an understanding of the broader sociocultural context and literacy practices of the participants (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Stein, 2008; Street, 1984, 1995), including learners and their families in particular and other people in their immediate environment. I closely observed the five children with the aim to uncover the literacy practices that they engaged in at home. I also asked the children questions as a way to understand how they interpreted both their literacy practices and play activities. From time to time during the home visits, I had informal discussions with the children asking for clarification on their artefacts such as written work, drawings and illustrations. I also sought clarity on their particular behaviours associated with their literacy practices. The home visits were also meant to create trust and understanding with the parents and guardians of the focal learners. Establishing of such an atmosphere was aimed at encouraging parents or guardians to be comfortable and to be more responsive during the semi-structured interviews I later had with them. The use of qualitative interviews is one useful component of participant observation.

4.3.4.2 Interviews

As recommended by many researchers, the recording of the interview data took place by means of note-taking and audio recording (Huberman & Miles, 2002; De Vos, 2005). Interviewing is regarded as one of the most powerful ways to understand human behaviour and for this reason, interviewing is also used in this research (Koshy, 2005). It is the most used method of collecting data in educational research, essential to pick up non-verbal cues, including facial expressions as interviewees "speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings" (Berg, 2007: 96). According to Maykut and Morehouse (2002), the interview is shaped and organised by asking and answering questions. In my research study, the participants agreed to be interviewed and to help me to pursue my focus of enquiry. The interviews are shaped by the depth of the conversation, which move beyond the surface talk to discussions of thought, feelings and to a climate of trust. This is the reason why interviews in qualitative

research are referred to as depth, or in-depth. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they allowed more clarifying, probing and crosschecking questions where the interviewer has the freedom to alter, rephrase and add questions according to the nature of responses from interviewees (Best & Kahn, 2003). The semi-structured interviews provided opportunities for the recording of peculiar and more free-flow responses.

Before the commencement of the interviews, I had to establish a friendly, free and cooperative relationship with the interviewees. I thanked them for their willingness to participate in the research and assured them of the confidentiality of their participation in the interview. Information and explanations of the nature of the study were included in the ethics letter that was given to each participant (please see Appendix B). A copy of the interview schedule, with the contact details of the researcher was provided to each interviewee for possible future enquiries. Although all information regarding the study was provided in the ethics letter, the background of the research and related aims were explained to provide the interviewees with more information about the research. Since the ethics letter was in English, it was translated in the language they understood better. The participants were also afforded an opportunity to seek clarity regarding the study. It was explained that the interviews would be audio recorded. The participants were asked qualitative questions using established qualitative procedures (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Semi-structured questions (Merriam, 2009) used in the interviews were prepared in advance (please see interview questions in Appendix D) but I developed new questions to probe interviewees during the course of each interview and in follow up interviews. The participants were made aware of the questions prior to the interviews by providing them with the questions in writing beforehand. The format and sequence of questioning were also explained before the actual interview. I informed the interviewees that the questions would only serve as a guide to our interviews so they were free to divert from those questions to discuss issues and ideas they considered most important or relevant. That approach allowed the participants to focus on issues of interest in their life experiences and perceptions of literacy in their different private or

professional space. Interview questions evolved primarily from participant observation, audio-recording of classroom literacy events, and activities and issues I had seen or heard with regard to literacy practices at the school and the homes of learners. I asked five to seven open-ended questions (Yin, 2009) regarding literacy levels, experiences, and behaviours of the participants related to literacy practices.

To reduce the tensions generally involved in the interview process, I allowed the participants to select the locations of the interviews so that their 'privacy' would be assured. I also assured them of their anonymity as I would use pseudonyms when citing their responses in my study. The participants chose different locations that included the educators' own classrooms or homes, the parents' homes, and the GDE officials' offices or homes. It was important that the interviews take place in settings that were comfortable and convenient for the participants. I conducted the interviews with a high sensitivity to the specific situation of each respondent, such as the school-specific circumstances and work-related priorities in case of educators and district officials; and the family responsibilities of parents. Caution and consideration should be implemented when conducting interviews. Interview skills are not simple motor skills, but involve a combination of observation, empathic sensitivity and intellectual judgement of the interview situation and the person being interviewed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The educators preferred to have their interviews during their 60 minute tea or lunch breaks so pace and time were continuously monitored during the interviews as the educators had limited time (Best & Kahn, 2003; Breen, 2006). The interviews with the educators occurred at various times throughout the school days only once a week for 30 to 60 minutes per interview. Two interviews were conducted with each educator. Interviews with these participants were my main source of information regarding in-school early childhood literacy practices. The interviews conducted during this phase of the study took place mainly between February and September 2013. These interviews were on-going throughout the school year and follow-ups continued into 2014 and 2015. Two sets of interviews were conducted with educators, District Officials, and parents.

Parent interviews:

I had two semi-structured interviews with each of the five parents. The first interview was conducted to gather background information while the second was a follow-up to seek clarity on information the participants raised on the first interview. The follow-up interview also provided an opportunity for frequent member checking. Member checking is explained in Section 4.5. As indicated, I first conducted background interviews with parents in order to gather demographic information and find out about their “focused life history” (Seidman, 2013: 14). For example the ‘focused’ portion of the parents’ interviews comprised information about their past experiences, including their educational background and literacy experiences. The ‘focused life history’ interviews using ‘how’ questions were meant to prompt the respondents to reconstruct their past and contextualise their current experience. Although Seidman (2013) advises that ‘why’ questions should be avoided, they can have a role in the interviews especially as a probing technique e.g. “Why do children hate reading?” (Seidman, 2013). The background interviews also focused on the general background of the children who were participants in the study. Each parent was asked seven questions. The parents were probed for information on the learners’ experiences with literacies. I encouraged all the parents to express themselves in any language in which they felt comfortable. Four of the five parents preferred using either Setswana or IsiZulu while the fifth parent preferred English but would code switch to Setswana during the course of the interview. The interviews with parents sought to uncover the children’s literacy practices and the role the parents played in them. I also wanted to find out the parents’ own literacy practices and how they impacted their children’s literacy practices. The interviews also served to query parents’ perceptions of the use of technology as a tool of literacy development in the classroom and at home. The main focus of the interviews with parents was to establish to what extent they mediated their children’s literacy practices such as homework. Finally, the interviews intended to uncover the challenges faced by both the parents and the children concerning literacy learning.

Educator interviews:

The second set of interviews was with the five educators. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the five educators. I asked each interviewee seven questions (please see Appendix D for the interview questions). The educators were given the choice to use any language they were comfortable with. The four female educators preferred using either Setswana or IsiZulu or English while the male educator preferred English only. The educators who opted at using Setswana or IsiZulu constantly code switched to English and I did the same. All the educators preferred having the interviews in their classrooms during tea or lunch breaks. The interviews lasted between 20 to 60 minutes. In my first question, I asked the educators about their background in both the teaching profession and experience in teaching the foundation phase. The next question focused on the educator's understanding of literacy. Although I had observed the educators' classroom practices, I asked them how they would effectively approach literacy teaching. On the question of pedagogy, I asked the educators' perceptions on the use of technology in the classroom. On issues of curriculum and policy, I asked for their views on GPLMS and ANA. I finally asked them about the challenges they faced in literacy teaching and possible solutions. The second interviews were follow up interviews with individual educators. The line of questioning differed from one educator to another depending on the nature of answers they presented in the first interview. The aim of the second set of interviews was to seek clarity on issues that individual educators presented in their response in the first interview. In addition to the formal interviews, I had informal interviews with the educators from time to time as I sought clarity on certain issues. As agreed with the educators, I could have telephonic or face-to-face talks with them.

District Official interviews:

The final set of interviews, was with the two District Officials in charge of the implementation of GPLMS. I had only one interview with each of the District Officials. I posed five questions to each interviewee. In this interview, I sought to uncover what GPLMS entailed to the educators and practitioners and how it is

implemented. The interviewees were requested to explain the success and failure of the strategy, and also give their opinion on the strategy.

As explained earlier in this section, all interview data were recorded by means of audio recording and note-taking (Huberman & Miles, 2002; De Vos, 2005). Note-taking served as an additional recording measure to expand on the audio recorded data. I transcribed the interviews myself. Most of the transcripts were either in Zulu or Tswana so I had to translate them to English. In this study, all the data quoted from the interviews is presented in English. To ensure accuracy of transcription of the interviews, I used an independent co-coder, who understood Setswana, IsiZulu and English, to quality check my transcription of the interviews. The respondents were also given an opportunity to validate the data, as I made available the transcripts for them to check for accuracy. This process of member checking occurred as the educators identified and corrected some of the errors in the transcripts. The overall interview data provided invaluable insight into the study. For the purposes of triangulation, the interview transcripts, and field notes; together with several other documents collected over the course of the study formed artefacts of the study. Other artefacts included the children's drawings, classwork exercises, illustrations and photographs, which were collected over the course of the study.

4.3.4.3 Fieldnotes

In qualitative research, observation is a data collection procedure while field notes are the data (Merriam, 2009). As I was observing the classrooms and the homes, I took extensive field notes. The field notes included two types of information, descriptive and reflective. The descriptive part of the field notes objectively detailed the physical setting, the people involved in the interactions observed, accounts of the interactions observed, the reconstruction of any dialogue, and the behaviours of the participants in the setting, as recommended by Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault (2016). In addition to descriptive material, my field notes contained reflective information, the subjective part of the observation experience. The reflective part of the field notes emphasised "on speculation, feelings, problems,

ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) relative to the children’s literacy practices both in school and outside school. The field notes taken to capture this data included records of what was observed, including formal semi-structured interviews with participants, records of activities, during which the researcher was unable to question participants about their activities, and journal notes that were kept on a daily basis (Kawulich, 2005).

In this study, fieldnotes drawn from classroom observations were my primary source of data. After each recorded classroom lesson observation, I wrote expanded fieldnotes following each classroom and home visit. Each entry began with the time, place, and purpose of the visit. I included a description of the physical setting, the daily routine, schedule, and planned activities of the classroom and noted changes in these events as they occurred (Merriam, 2009). Intertwined throughout the factual descriptions, I added appropriate analytical comments or questions. Those comments and questions were transferred to a research log that I kept throughout the study to record wonderings, emerging themes, and reflections on conversations with educators. The research log was an important data source as it is where initial themes and patterns that emerged during the research process were recorded. Written fieldnotes were recorded on the classroom setting, on classroom activities, on the playground activities, school committee meetings; and home setting, on children’s routines, home activities and any other activities associated with literacy development. My initial set of fieldnotes included diagrams of the classrooms, seating arrangements, class timetables, school activities and schedules; and issues of interest regarding educator and learner interactions. As the research study proceeded, my fieldnotes became more specific to the research questions guiding the study. For example, when I observed the children’s literacy events, I asked them questions in order to understand how they interpreted their pay activities. The field notes became artefacts.

4.3.4.4 Artefacts and data

Artefacts and the study of artefacts as a methodology have become an area of inquiry for theorists across different fields, such as New Literacy Studies (Barton and Hamilton, 1998); multimodality (Pahl, 2004); and material culture (Hurdley, 2006; Hurdley & Dicks, 2008; Miller, 2001, 2008). This approach to data collection is distinct in that it does not only contextualise research in space, time, and through identities, but also regards material worlds as reflections of people's real lives and real-world settings (Roswell, 2011: 334). Artefacts used in this study were often found within classrooms, households and extended across the entire research sites and domains to become meaningful. Talking about artefacts provides ways into narratives that are not always accessible in other ways (Hurdley, 2006). For example, with this study in mind, artefacts were used to teach literacy. Artefacts unearthed stories that gave me, as the researcher, a broader space for analysing how school, family, community, and life events mediate literacy. As mentioned earlier, research studies within the field of New Literacy Studies use artefacts as part of a research design and focus on households and social practice in households. In an earlier study, Barton and Hamilton (1998), for instance, document the stories of people living in a community in the north of England to present a notion of collaborative ethnography which involves people documenting their own realities through photography and objects and documents in their homes. Similarly, Kate Pahl (2004) looks at how children's text-making in the home holds visual and linguistic properties and these artefacts serve as powerful tracers of meaning making and identities. Other fields of research and theory have examined artefacts as a reflection of social process such as cultural and material studies. In his study of objects in households, Daniel Miller (2008: 1) reveals how "possessions often remain profound" and by extension, as he discovered that "the closer our relationships are with objects, the closer our relationships are with people". His study, focusing on homes filled with artefacts and those without artefacts, illustrates how these material worlds reflect back on participants and their lived experiences. In a similar manner, Rachel Hurdley (2006) examines why people display objects, by interviewing participants about the meaning of objects that they display on mantelpieces. Arguing that narratives

and objects inhabit an intersection of the personal and the social, Hurdley digs deep into 'private experiences of self' through narrative recollections about home possessions. In the present study, I gathered documents and artefacts from the school and homes of participants, because these data sources provided information regarding literacy practices in which the learners engaged. Artefacts provided insight into how these modes and media function in and outside the classroom, and also provided insight to the educators' roles, beliefs and values regarding literacy education. Artefacts collected over the school year included samples of children's hand-written texts from their school books, drawings and illustrations. The aim was to analyse these artefacts in order to gain insight into what constitute writing and learning to write in children's perspective. The educators also provided me with the grade time tables and school schedule of events which I used to schedule my data collection visits to the school.

Data mostly comprised Audio tapes. Audio tapes were the most important sources of data in this study. All the observed literacy events and the interviews were only audio recorded or photographed. Audiotapes offered a greater concreteness of data than my observations, and they provided a permanent record of interviews and the children's verbal interactions. During analysis, the audiotapes allowed me to return repeatedly to specific events. The recordings were also used for developing further questions that I posed to the participants during follow-up interviews meant for clarification and elaboration of issues they raised. I chose to audio record the participants because I did not want to disturb the class as I had noticed on a previous occasion learners acting in a disruptive manner on realising they were being filmed.

Other data important to my study were photographs or images that I took at the school and the homes of learners. Photographs are a useful source of data as they hold an event or activity still for a closer look. As with audiotapes, photographs offer permanence and the ability to freeze time. I took photographs of different artefacts collected in the course of the research, such as samples of children's writing and drawing. I also took pictures of books that were used as readers. As

shown in several studies that use photographs taken by researchers, I included some form of description and analysis in order to give meaning to the images. This is supported by Barbara Harrison, who claims that interpretation is an “act of construction, which involves the interpreter as much as the maker of the representation” (Harrison, 2002: 867). As well as discussing meaning of each photograph, I relied on my fieldnotes for a wider view of classroom events than an audio recording would allow. In the classroom, I photographed any item of interest such as wall charts, covers of books, teaching aids, and written work on the chalk board. The aim of collecting these artefacts was to analyse how they promoted literacy development. All of these artefacts were collected digitally and stored in different folders, labelled according to the pseudonyms of each participant. I also collected school documents such as samples of GPLMS lesson plans in order to gain an understanding of the nature of pedagogy in the foundation phase classroom. Literature from literacy intervention team meetings also constituted the artefacts. All artefacts collected formed part of the data for this study and supported my inquiry into the broader context of this study. They also support the claims and conclusions on issues that I raised in the data analysis.

4.4 Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) describe data analysis as the most difficult and most crucial aspect of qualitative research. It is viewed as difficult because it is not just a mechanical or technical exercise but a dynamic, intuitive and creative process of inductive reasoning, reflection, and theorizing (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009: 178) describes data analysis as a “process of making sense and meaning from the data that constitute the finding of the study”. In all data analysis, regardless of whether it is within a positivist or naturalistic research tradition, the purpose is to organize and elicit meaning from the data collected and draw realistic conclusions (Polit & Beck, 2006). In qualitative research, data collection and analysis take place concurrently to build a coherent interpretation of the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Through analysis, the researcher attempts to gain a deeper understanding of what he or she has studied and to refine interpretations continually (Basit, 2003). The researcher draws on first-hand experience with the

setting, informants, and documents to interpret the data (Bogdan & Bilkin, 2007; Merriam, 2009). The choice of a method for data collection and analysis depends upon the purpose of the study, the resources available and the skills of the researcher. After transcribing the interviews, I translated the transcribed interviews to English. The interviews and field notes converged as one dataset. The primary documents represented the interviews of the educators, District Officials and parents. Some interviews were conducted in IsiZulu or Setswana or English as the participants chose to. Quotations from such interview are translated into English. In the data analysis chapters, Chapters 5 and 6, only the translated English versions of the data are quoted. Before analysing the data, I first read all the interview transcripts repeatedly to gain a sense of the whole information and to facilitate the interpretation of smaller units of data.

Data in this study was analysed by means of a descriptive and interpretive approach which aimed to understand and report the views and culture which includes histories and ethnography (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The presentation of the study's findings was a descriptive one; data was compressed and linked together in a narrative that conveyed the meaning from the study and then analysed. First, I grouped the data into text segments then compared and contrasted the text segments to identify context bearing data segments, and naming and classifying categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 464). The text segments were in form of themes from different interviews such as attitudes towards homework and home language teaching. I then analysed the data by constructing categories or themes that captured recurring patterns that emerged from the data (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004: 106). Henning et al. (2004: 104-107) refer to this process of data analysis as qualitative content analysis. As a data analysis method, qualitative content analysis is unique in that it has both a quantitative (Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002) and a qualitative methodology (Berg, 2009; Burnard, 2006; Silverman, 2011), and it can be used in an inductive or a deductive way. When used for data analysis, qualitative content analysis is aimed at developing a functional theory through generalisation as well as a conceptualised understanding of the data. Krippendorff (2004: 18) described

content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use.” This functional theory can provide a clear understanding of the early childhood literacy practices in a multilingual context. Bryman (2004: 392) states that qualitative content analysis is "probably the most prevalent approach to the qualitative analysis of documents" and that it "comprises a searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analyzed". Being a little bit more specific he defines qualitative content analysis as:

An approach to documents that emphasizes the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of and in texts. There is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of data and on recognizing the significance for understanding the meaning of the context in which an item being analyzed (and the categories derived from it) appeared (Bryman, 2004: 542).

However, this seems to be rather the description of a general approach to analysing documents qualitatively. Obviously, the strength of qualitative content analysis is that it is strictly controlled methodologically and that the material is analysed step-by-step. Central to it is a category system which is developed right on the material employing a theory-guided procedure. Titscher et al. (2000: 58) put it like this:

The core and central tool of any content analysis is its system of categories: every unit of analysis must be coded, that is to say, allocated to one or more categories. Categories are understood as the more or less operational definitions of variables.

The process of qualitative content analysis is presented in the following figure, Figure 4.2

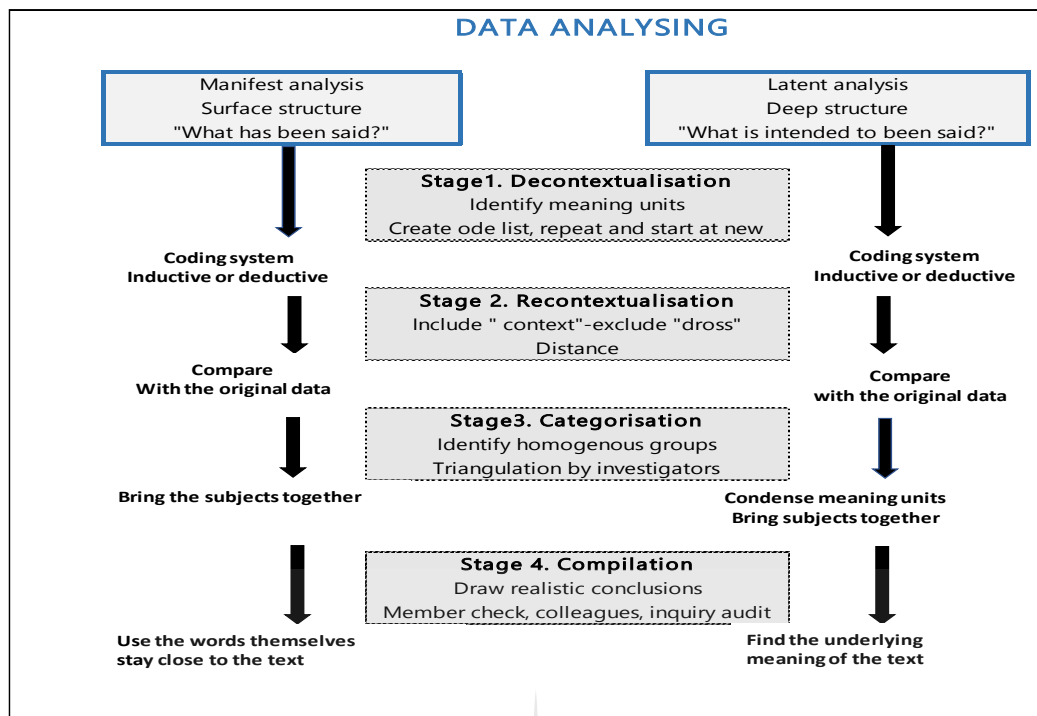


Figure. 4.2: Analysing Data using qualitative content analysis (Source: Bengtsson, 2016).

In this study, the data was analysed using qualitative content analysis (Hamilton, 2000), consisting firstly of inductive category coding and simultaneous comparison of units of meaning and then coded in terms of meaning across categories (Henning et. al., 2004: 102-105). Inductive reasoning is the process of developing conclusions from collected data by weaving together new information into theories (Berg, 2001). At this stage, the researcher analyses the text with an open mind in order to identify meaningful subjects answering the research question (Polit & Beck, 2006). In a case study it is important to gain a sense of the whole data. In order to accomplish this goal, I read all the transcripts of interviews, field notes, and documents to make sense of the whole data before examining unique aspects. I then read the data for a second time and made notes using short phrases, ideas, or key concepts related to the research questions. These phrases, ideas, and key concepts identified codes or categories that could be applied to words, phrases, or sentences within the data. For example, the short phrases were parental involvement, classroom practices or home language teaching. The data set was divided into smaller units of meaning and then coded in terms of the meaning. I then compared one unit of information with another, looking for

recurring consistencies and patterns in the data to assign the information into categories. The names of the categories reflected the focus and purpose of my study as they were directed at answering the research questions. These categories were subsequently developed into themes constituting my data. I double-checked, refined my own analysis and interpretations to ensure validity and reliability. Validity and reliability are essential to ensure trustworthiness of research as discussed in the next section.

4.5 Trustworthiness

Examination of trustworthiness in qualitative research is crucial to ensure validity and reliability. Silverman (2009: 283) views validity and reliability as “two important concepts to keep in mind when doing research, because in them the objectivity and credibility of research are at stake.” According to Trochim (2001: 1-2), reliability and validity contribute to the study’s trustworthiness. The “trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability” (Seale, 2000: 266). According to Patton (2002), validity and reliability are two factors which qualitative researchers should be concerned about while designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study. In any paradigm, the issues of reliability and validity are meant to differentiate a 'good' from 'bad' research by testing and increasing quality and rigor (De Vos, 2005). Reliability and validity are important because “in them the objectivity and credibility of research are at stake” (Silverman, 2009: 283). However, validity is considered to be more important and comprehensible than reliability, as it is harder to evaluate or measure (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002: 267).

Reliability:

Although ‘reliability’ is a concept most used for testing or evaluating quantitative research, it is also used in other kinds of research. If we see the idea of testing as a way of information elicitation then the most important test of any qualitative study is its quality (Jandagh & Matin, 2010: 66). The concept of a good quality in qualitative study has the purpose of “generating understanding” (Stenbacka,

2001: 551). The difference in purposes of evaluating the quality of studies in qualitative and quantitative research is one of the reasons that the concept of reliability is seen as irrelevant in qualitative research. Measuring reliability in the traditional sense of repeated measures to obtain similar results is problematic when it comes to qualitative research because of human behaviour involved (Merriam, 2009). Reliability in qualitative studies should be determined by the results that are consistent with the data collected. In this study, I used the following strategies to ensure that my findings were reliable:

- *Code-recode strategy*: I coded the data over an extended period of time to ensure consistency of coding strategy.
- *Triangulation*: Triangulation was used to help me to reduce bias and to cross-examine the integrity of participants' responses. Triangulation is used by qualitative researchers to ensure a research account that is rich, robust, comprehensive and well developed (Thurmond, 2001). Triangulation involves using multiple data sources in the investigation to produce understanding. Two major triangulation techniques were employed in this study. The first was data triangulation, where I used different sources of data or research instruments, such as interviews, participant observation, and different informants to enhance the quality of the data (Anney, 2014). As data was extracted from the original sources, researchers I had to verify its accuracy in terms of form and context with constant comparison (George & Apter, 2004), either alone or with peers (as a form of triangulation) (Patton, 2002). The second is methodological triangulation that uses different research methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Patton, 2002; Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). In this study I used more than one method to collect data: interviewing and observation.

Validity:

In qualitative research, validity means “appropriateness” of the tools, processes, and data (Leung, 2015). Validity refers to the truth (or falsify) of prepositions generated by research. It provides a test of whether the collected data correctly gauge what is measured (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 648; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002:

302; Mills, 2003: 96). In order to increase validity of this study, I used the following strategies:

- *Field work and long-term observation*: Qualitative research data collection requires the researcher to immerse him or herself in the participants' world (Bitsch, 2005). This helps the researcher to gain an insight into the context of the study, which minimizes the distortions of information that might arise due to the presence of the researcher in the field. The researcher's extended time in the field improves the trust of the respondents and provides a greater understanding of participants' culture and context (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). I conducted the research in a natural setting to promote the reality of the respondents' experiences more accurately. Interim data analysis and corroboration enhanced the validity of data collected over a period of time. Thus, prolonged engagement in the fieldwork helped me to understand the core issues that might affect the quality of the data because it helped to develop trust with study participants (Anney, 2014).
- *Researcher transcription*: As I am fluent in the languages used by respondents, I personally transcribed all the verbatim transcripts rather than using external transcribers. It has been observed that a researcher who transcribed his/her own interviews finds it easier to manage a small number of interviews or selected extracts only as Creswell (2011: 209) suggests it is easier "to study a few individuals or a few cases". Some advantages perceived in doing one's own transcription work, include gaining greater familiarity with the data and deeper insight (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). The transcribed verbatim recordings were checked for accuracy against the audio-recordings and, for ethical reasons, all personally identifiable information was removed from the transcripts (Austin & Sutton, 2014).
- *Respondent verbatim accounts*: Through audio recording, I obtained accurate verbatim accounts of exact statements of respondents that provided concrete evidence of my findings. The use of audio recording equipment strengthened the validity of the primary data recorded, and captured a greater range of verbal cues observed in direct classroom instruction.

- *Literature control*: I used multiple literature resources to confirm and enhance my findings. Literature control is a strategy used to validate the findings of the study. Information from literature sources provides the background on which the results of data analysis could be interpreted. It is used when analysing data because existing knowledge and information should be consistent with phenomenon being studied (De Vos, 2005). According to De Vos (2005: 264-265) the results of the research need to be related to an existing theoretical framework and research, therefore a literature control from relevant studies is employed to justify the trustworthiness of the results. Literature control provides a framework for the study and its academic contribution to the existing body of knowledge (Creswell, 2013).
- *Data/informants triangulation*: Following anthropological traditions, I used triangulation of data to improve reliability and to provide a comprehensive, holistic view of the issue under consideration (Bernard, 2011). In this study, triangulation involved using different sources of data or research instruments, such as interviews, observations, and artefacts to corroborate findings. This was meant to enhance the quality of the data from different sources.
- *Member checks*: In this study, I used member checks a strategy of ensuring trustworthiness. Member checks as a crucial process in any qualitative research are used to ensure credibility of data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). In this process, the researcher is required to include the voices of respondents in the analysis and interpretation of the data. The purpose of doing member checks is to eliminate researcher bias when analysing and interpreting the results. The analysed and interpreted data is sent back to the participants for them to evaluate the interpretation made by the inquirer and to suggest changes if they are unhappy with it or they think they have been misreported (Anney, 2014). Informants may reject an interpretation made by the researcher, either because it is socially undesirable or because of the way in which it is presented by the researcher (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007). In this study, I gave the respondents an opportunity to review the transcribed interviews to check for accuracy of presentation. All the respondents agreed to the accuracy of the transcription. The participants were also involved in

checking the findings during the data analysis stage of the study. This form of participant checking was particularly helpful in my study, where the participants pointed out where they thought some of my findings were erroneous and clarified their positions on those issues. Participants were made aware that they could also be involved in the final check of the data after I had written up the results of the study for submission to my institution. Therefore, the summary of the research results was carefully discussed with the respondents in order to obtain their perspectives about conclusions drawn from the research (LeCompte, 2010). All respondents agreed to the accuracy of the text documents.

4.6 Ethical measures

Ethics are generally considered to deal with beliefs about what is right or wrong, proper or improper, good or bad (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Since most educational research focus primarily on human beings, the researcher is therefore ethically responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of the subjects who participate in the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In this study, ethical measures were followed in order to ensure strict protection of the rights and identity of participants' information. To ensure confidentiality of the participants' identity, Austin and Sutton (2014: 439) strongly recommend anonymization of data, although "true anonymization may be difficult, as participants can sometimes be recognized from their stories". The identity of the participants was protected when working with data and writing up this research. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms are used for both the research sites and the participants.

This research project was conducted according to the ethical measures and guidelines of the Research Ethics of the University of Johannesburg. As required, a research proposal was presented to the University of Johannesburg doctoral committee for approval. Upon approval by the doctoral committee, the proposal was submitted to the Faculty Higher degrees committee and finally the Ethics committee for approval before the commencement of the research. On receipt of

an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Johannesburg, permission was sought from the research site principal at least one month before research was undertaken as stipulated in the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) policy. My research supervisor signed the declaration on the research request form indicating that the research had been approved by the Higher Degrees Committee (HDC) of the University of Johannesburg. Data collection in the school only took place within the period stipulated by GDE policy. According to GDE guidelines, research conducted in its Institutions can only be undertaken from the second week of February of the school year up to the end of the third term of the same year, which is normally at the end of September.

As this study primarily involved young children, their parents' consent was sought. During the first meeting with the children and their parents, the researcher's identity was established. The research process was explained to both the children and their parents in the language they preferred and understood. The parents were given time to ask questions before signing the consent forms (please refer to the consent letter in Appendix B). The participants and their parents were informed about the research goals, processes and outcomes of the study. Their identity was protected by use of pseudonyms. The research participants were not coerced or obliged to partake in any activity, but to voluntarily take part in activities pertaining to the study of their own will. The learner participants in this study were observed or studied within the sites specified in the consent forms and the researcher was not to take them from their homes without their parents' knowledge and permission. Any activity that was to be recorded or any written documents that were to be collected from the participants were to be done with their parents' and educators' consent. All the participants were told that when the project was complete they would be informed about the findings in a clear manner to avoid misrepresentation of events and information. Participants were informed that any information they may wish not to be included in the research could be removed or rephrased in a manner that would not misrepresent any events or information but maintain accuracy of information. In that respect, all personally identifiable information was removed from the transcripts.

4.7 Summary

This chapter primarily dealt with the research design and methodology of this study. It justified the choice of the case study research approach. Throughout this chapter I have shown how the case study has drawn on the underlying epistemology of the interpretive stance. The qualitative data collection method was discussed and substantiation was given for choosing this particular research approach. Since a case study design is based on the nature of the research problem, I explained that this was the most appropriate means of investigating multiple social units. I thus adopted the position that knowledge of reality is a social constructed by a certain group of people, whilst at the same time a co-constructive process of making meaning exists within that particular group of people (Walsham, 2006; Emond, 2000). Since an understanding of the literacy practices of the participants in the case study is the aim, I concur with Prinsloo and Stein (2004: 4) who argue that literacy “is seen as a social practice which is mediated by language and other cultural tools and artefacts [...] in a context in which social actors position, and are positioned by each other in social semiotic interaction”. The different means of data collection to reflect this aim were described in this chapter. These included interviews, observations, field notes and photographs, and the outline of my data analysis. The research settings were briefly defined as background in which the case study took place. The strategies implemented to ascertain trustworthiness was pointed out. The ethical considerations taken into account and the limitations of this study were outlined.

The data collected during the study is discussed and analysed in the next two chapters: Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5, in particular, maps out the literacy events and practices that take place within the domain of the children’s school and communities.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

MAPPING CHILDREN'S LITERACY PRACTICES

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, I discussed the research design and domain of my study in this case study of five Grade 3 learners. The social context within this domain was outlined, followed by an explanation of the research process and the means of data collection. In this chapter I discuss the findings I made in the children's homes and school, focusing on the literacy practices and events documented in the study. First, the chapter describes the Grade 3 classroom setting at Kutlwano Primary School in order to situate the context of literacy instruction within the physical classroom environment. This is followed by a discussion on children's early encounters with formal literacy in Grade R. This discussion reflects the role played by the educators and the parents (including the communities) of the focal learners in developing early childhood literacies. I then present a discussion of the educators' instructional practices and the focal learners' literacy practices in the classroom. Finally, the descriptive analysis of the classroom literacy practices and discussion on the pedagogy informing teaching and assessment at Kutlwano Primary school are in answer to the following two questions of the study:

- *How can the literacy practices of young children be mapped at home and school?*
- *How do these literacy practices manifest in the teaching and learning process?*

5.2 The classroom setting

In the sections that follow, I present a description of the Grade 3 classroom setting. The purpose of this description is to situate the context of literacy instruction within the physical classroom environment. As I describe the interior of the classroom, I provide a sense of the physical space where learning and teaching is taking place. The description includes the seating arrangement, selected furnishings and artefacts relating to literacy instruction in the third grade

classroom. Like most of the South African township classrooms, some of the third grade classrooms in Kutlwano Primary School are overcrowded, with each class having 60 learners or more. The current recommended average class size is 40 learners.



Image 5.1: Classroom seating arrangement

As shown in image 5.1, learners in the Grade 3 classroom are seated in groups of 4-6 as they often share text books and other learning material such as activity worksheets. Two to four learners share two desks that face each other. This seating arrangement allows the learners to easily interact with each other during group discussions. Some classes are so overcrowded that there is hardly any space for the educator to move up and down the classroom. The recommended learner-educator ratio for South African primary schools is 40:1 (Motshekga, 2012). The educator's table is located at the front of the classroom next to the chalkboard. At the back of the classroom is designated space for charts and spelling reading cards where children do 'read aloud' activities. On the walls of all the classrooms that I

visit there is evidence of learning material including work cards, alphabet strips, worksheets and charts as illustrated in the following images.



Image 5.2: The reading cards pasted on the wall

As swift glance at Image 5.2, shows that the educator has not grouped the words starting with 'c' phonemically, suggesting poor understanding of how to teach literacy.

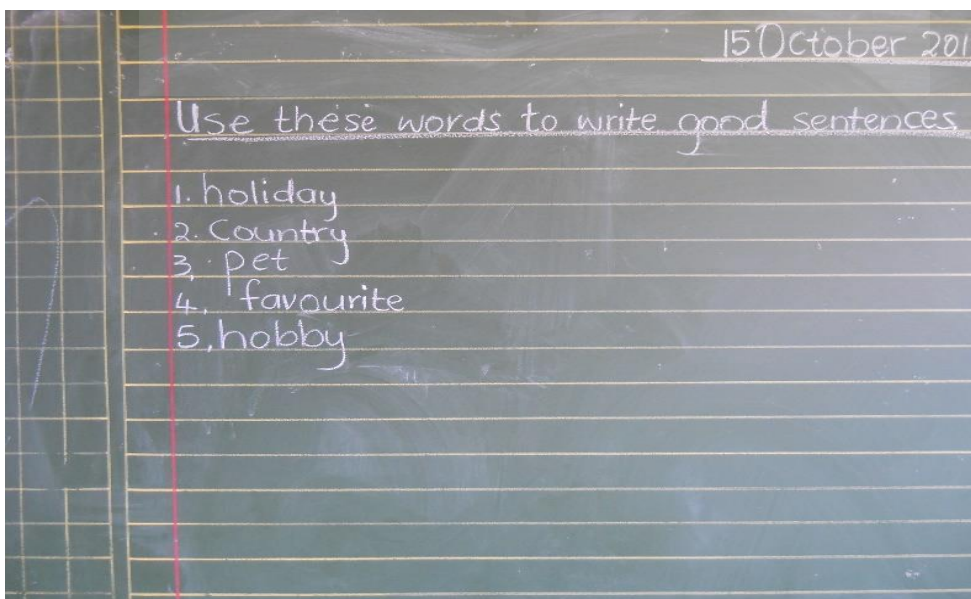


Image 5.3: The chalkboard

The chalkboard is the main teaching aid used in all the classrooms in Kutlwano Primary School. The educators in this school do not use any electronic media such as projectors or smart boards because such equipment is unavailable at the school. They write their teaching notes and illustrations on the chalkboard. On a few occasions they use worksheets. The School Governing Board (SGB) does not encourage the use of worksheets as it views the use of printing and paper as being too costly to the school. The images presented in this section portray Kutlwano Primary School as having a shortage of modern learning and teaching resources. Educators in the school do not make use of computer-aided learning and smart boards.

In every classroom there is a cupboard located in the corner next to the door. This is where the educator stores the learners' reading and portfolio files and many other learning and teaching materials. Having provided a description of the physical classroom setting, the next sections will first focus on educators' perception of formal literacy development in Grade R, followed by literacy instruction in the Grade 3 classroom at Kutlwano Primary school in particular.

5.3 Educators' perception of Grade R

In this section, I discuss the educators' perception of children's encounters with formal literacy in Grade R. In South Africa, schooling starts at Grade R which prepares children for Grade one in the following year. With the aim of enquiring about the implications of early childhood education, I posed to the educators the question: *Do you think it is necessary for learners to attend Grade R and pre-school before going to Grade one?* The question produced various responses.

According to Ms Hamba, Grade R prepares children to start school properly because it prevents delaying children in acquiring the necessary school-related skills. In Ms Hamba's opinion, exposing children to literacy at an early age provides children with a rich learning background. This is consistent with Duncan and Seymour's (2000) observation that not exposing children to letters of the alphabet before formal school entry delays their ability to acquire foundation-level literacy.

School related literacies are what Gee (2012) terms secondary Discourses. Ms Hamba sums up the reasons why it is important for children to do Grade R:

Yah, I have learnt that children who have a strong foundation they excel. They excel at the higher (levels). If a child did not get that foundation it means he has been crippled for years. I think Grade R prepares the learner to start school properly because it avoids the delay because the actual teaching starts in Grade one. So if a child's motor skills are not yet developed it's a problem because if children are at home they don't experience the same thing. Other parents they don't know how to prepare their children for school. So if they go to pre-school, it prepares the learner for school and the child is emotionally developed and his motor skills are developed (Interview with Ms Hamba, 2013).

In the above extract, Ms Hamba uses the analogy of disability and compares not doing Grade R to having an 'educational disability' that could hinder a child from excelling at school. In Ms Hamba's opinion a child who has not done Grade R starts Grade one with underdeveloped psycho-motor skills. She points out that pre-school or Grade R prepares learners for school and develops them emotionally in preparation for Grade one. According to Ms Hamba, children who do not do Grade R are devoid of formal school experience as some parents do not know how to prepare their children for school.

Similarly, Ms Tafane echoes Ms Hamba's view that children who have attended pre-school or Grade R, possess positive self-esteem by the time they start Grade one. She points out that the job of foundation phase educators becomes easier as children who have done Grade R start Grade one already knowing the alphabet. Ms Tafane also believes that some children from good crèches or pre-schools speak English well, which in her opinion is prerequisite to learning since English is the main medium of instruction in South African schools. On the contrary, although mastering English at a young age can be advantageous, Ms Tafane expresses concern that children who have attended crèche are not proficient in their home language. This lack of proficiency becomes problematic when they are taught in home language. This point is supported by research conducted by Baker (2001). The approach of teaching children in an additional language is termed "subtractive bilingualism" (Cummins, 2008). Subtractive bilingualism has been viewed to yield negative effects as affected children have been observed to

regress in both their home and second language, and subsequently lose the cognitive/ academic proficiency skills of the home language (Baker, 2001; Cummins, 2008).

Ms Fakude, another educator at Kutlwano Primary School also expresses the advantages of children attending pre-school or crèche. She, like Ms Tafane, also believes that it is helpful for a child to attend pre-school or crèche instead of the child just leaving home and going straight to Grade one. She points out that:

At least when he (sic) arrives here, he's clever and is used to other children and is able to speak. If he's just from home, he's afraid when he starts mingling with other children (Interview with Ms Fakude, 2013).

Ms Fakude's comment suggests that she finds children who have attended pre-school or crèche as being confident and able to express themselves better than those who have not. According to her, children who have attended pre-school or crèche can easily 'mingle' with other children at school. Her opinion is reiterated by Mr Kupe who views Grade R as playing a pivotal role in preparing learners for foundation phase. Mr Kupe argues that if learners do not possess the learning basics of Grade R, they present learning problems as educators have:

[...] to teach them how to hold a pencil, understanding of the teaching matters and stuff. But those who are exposed to Grade R you find them being more advantageous than those who have never been exposed to Grade R (Interview with Mr Kupe, 2013).

Contrary to the other educators' beliefs, Ms Dube believes that even if children do not attend pre-school they can be prepared for school by their siblings and parents as will be discussed in Chapter 6. She expresses reservations on Grade R as she believes that they expose young children to English too early. In her view, "this destroys their mother tongue and they struggle when we teach them in mother tongue". Ms Dube's argument is consistent with many researchers' beliefs that there is little benefit and potential harm in introducing a second language at a very young age unless educators are careful to maintain both languages as equally important and valuable (Clark, 2013)

In summary, the educators' observations are consistent with some research findings that exposing children to letters of the alphabet before school entry is advantageous as it avoids delays to their ability to acquire foundation-level literacy (Duncan & Seymour, 2000). Foundation-level literacy is found to be a cognitive framework that consists of the recognition and storage of words and the ability to decode words on the basis of spelling-sound correspondences (Duncan & Seymour, 2000). Other early years skills identified as strong determinants of future achievement are demonstrating letter-naming abilities before age five (Hammill, 2004); understanding narrative and story (Cremin, 2007; Riessman, 2001); understanding writing functions (Gillen & Hall, 2013); knowing nursery rhymes (Goswami, 2001); demonstrating some phonological awareness (Goswami & Bryant, 2007; Stainthorp & Hughes, 1999); and being capable of explanatory talk (Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001).

5.4 Literacy instruction in the third grade classroom

In this section I present findings on the classroom instructional practices of third grade educators at Kutlwano Primary School. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Kutlwano Primary School is classified as a poorly performing school (PPS), so classroom instruction in the foundation phase (Grade 1-3) is guided by the lesson plans provided in the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) GPLMS manual. At the time of the data collection for this study GPLMS is the prescribed teaching strategy implemented in all PPS schools in Gauteng Province. GPLMS is aimed at managing the pace of the lessons in the phase. All the foundation phase educators are required to follow the GDE lesson plans supplied by the Gauteng Department of Education are meant to provide educators with clear time allocations, weekly routines, revision weeks, marking guidance and recording tools. These lesson plans integrate the content and assessments required by CAPS (GDE, 2012b). The lesson plans are divided into weeks with each week having its theme. There are different literacy activities in each week covering writing, reading and oral activities (GDE, 2012b). All educators teaching the same grade are expected to teach the same content at the same pace in accordance with the lesson plan. Their daily schedule includes 90 minutes of guided reading instruction, 30 minutes of

shared reading and writing experiences, 30 minutes of literacy centred activities, and 20 minutes of independent silent reading. Life Skills lessons are integrated into reading and writing activities. In the GPLMS strategy, educators are provided with readers and theme posters to improve the quality of their teaching. The theme posters are meant to help educators conceptualise their practice. Most of the readers written in Setswana and isiZulu are produced in South Africa. Some of the books written in English are produced in South Africa while others are produced in other countries such as USA and UK.

In trying to gain an understanding of the educators' approaches to literacy teaching I observed their classes and interviewed them. Interviews were meant to seek clarity on their teaching approaches and how they align with the lessons I observed. In this section, I discuss the different approaches to literacy teaching adopted by the educators in this study. To guide me in this discussion, I draw on results of the classroom observations and responses to the question I posed to educators: *What would be your best approach to literacy teaching?*

Ms Hamba:

In her words, Ms Hamba says 'consolidation' must be done before she starts a lesson because she has to know at what level the children are so that she can "pick them from there and move on". In order to ensure that she is able to give appropriate attention to learners with different abilities she divides them into groups according to their abilities so that she can be able to help those who are "struggling". She indicates that she uses different styles to teach the fast and slow learners. In the extract below she explains how she helps the 'slow' learners:

We do give attention to slow learners. You know that they are going to do the same thing with fast learners so you explain things while faster ones are doing something. You explain them at a level at which they will understand and when they push then they go and join the others. Because it might not be that the child has serious problems but that the child missed something in the previous class so they need to catch up (Interview with Ms Hamba, 2013).

In this extract Ms Hamba describes her inclusive approach to literacy teaching. She says she first explains concepts differently to individual learners. On teaching

children how to read, Ms Hamba starts by re-teaching, starting from teaching the alphabet. From the alphabet she proceeds to the pictures and gives learners vocabulary words. She says that she gives learners a lot of homework that requires them to read most of the time. According to her, using this strategy helps her learners improve their reading ability. She thinks that learners whose reading does not show any improvement could have learning problems. However, Ms Hamba admits that most children find comprehension challenging:

Sometimes they can give you a thought that maybe they understand what you are saying (and) respond well in oral work. But when it comes to writing you find that this child whom I thought was understanding is actually nowhere when it comes to writing (Interview with Ms Hamba, 2013).

Ms Hamba has observed that learners can show oral understanding of concepts but when it comes to writing they are challenged. This challenge is also highlighted in the DBE (2012) report on the learners' performance in systematic evaluations. The report reveals that most learners do not only display low literacy levels, their inability to write is also highlighted. When I enquire if that problem could be a result of the learners' limited vocabulary, Ms Hamba says it may be the case although she tries to expose them to as much vocabulary as possible. She does this through the use of a poster, as she explains how she does it:

The posters have different themes. Each poster has its own theme. It gives the learner vocabulary for him (sic) to be able to construct sentences for creative writing. Throughout the term the child gains vocabulary. All the other forms of writing are from these themes...spelling, storytelling etc. (Interview with Ms Hamba, 2013).

According to Ms Hamba, the poster represents different themes that have to be taught within a stipulated period such as a week or fortnight. The lesson based on the poster is meant to expose learners to new vocabulary which they can adapt to their everyday knowledge, and use to construct their own sentences, which can subsequently lead to creative writing. The following transcript of an extract of a lesson is an example of how Ms Hamba uses the poster in her classroom:

Ms Hamba: Let us look at the picture. We are going to describe what we see. The boy is staring at the TV screen with his father. The boy kneels next to the TV. Do you know what is to kneel?

Learners' hands 'shoot up' as they eagerly want to give an answer.

Ms Hamba: Can you come and show me how to kneel?

A learner volunteers and comes to the front to demonstrate how to kneel.

Ms Hamba: When we kneel what do we use?

Class 2: Kneel!

Ms Hamba: No, knees! The boy is wearing his school uniform. Who is wearing his school uniform?

Class 2: The boy is wearing his school uniform.

Ms Hamba: What is the colour of our school uniform?

Class 2: Blue!

Ms Hamba: Why do we wear a school uniform?

Mashudu: To be smart.

Ms Hamba: And?

Learner 2: To look beautiful.

Ms Hamba: And?

Mashudu: So that other people knows we belong to this school.

Ms Hamba: Good. Now, I will continue. Dad is reading the newspaper. Who is reading the newspaper?

Class 2: Dad is reading the newspaper.

Ms Hamba: The boy is looking at the TV. What is happening in the TV?

Class 2: Burning house.

Ms Hamba: You must learn to answer in...?

Class 2: Full!

Ms Hamba: Dad reads the newspaper with his son. 'His' is different from 'her'. 'Her' we use it for...?

Learner 5: Mother.

Ms Hamba: And?

Learner 2: Girl.

Ms Hamba: Good. 'His' we use it for...?

Class 2: Boy!

Ms Hamba: 'Her' we use it for...?

Class 2: Female!

Ms Hamba: We must answer in...?

Class 2: Full!

Ms Hamba: Who looks at the TV with his father?

Class 2: The boy is looking at the TV with his father.

Ms Hamba: At what does the boy points?

Learner 6: The boy points at fire.

Ms Hamba: What do you do when you see something burning?

Mashudu: I scream.

Learner 2: I try to call fire fighter.

Ms Hamba: Can you tell me. What are fire fighters?

Students are quiet, unsure of the answer. The teacher probes further.

Ms Hamba: Do you remember we talked about fire fighters in Life Skills.

Learner 7: The fire fighter is the people who put the fire out.

(The teacher reverts to the subject of the school uniform).

Ms Hamba: Who is wearing his school uniform?

Class 2: The boy is wearing his school uniform.
 Ms Hamba: If you listen attentively you will be able to answer in full. What does dad read with his son?
 Learner 8: Dad his son... (*Class laughs loudly*).
 Learner 2: Dad read newspaper with her son.
 Ms Hamba: Her son?
 Class 2: His son!
 Ms Hamba: What is dad doing?
 Class 2: Dad is reading the newspaper with his son.
 Ms Hamba: What does the boy look at?
 Class 2: The boy look at TV with the house burning.
 Ms Hamba: Before you reach the burning house what do you see?
 Class 2: Smoke!
 Ms Hamba: Good. Remember to call adults when you see fire, *neh?*

Transcript 5.1: Lesson instruction in Ms Hamba's class

Although Ms Hamba is using a scripted lesson plan, she tries to be creative in her teaching. For example, she does not confine her vocabulary teaching to simple meaning of the word 'kneel' but asks the learners to demonstrate how to kneel. She further introduces a new word 'knee' as she asks the learners what part of the body one uses when they kneel. This approach makes learners aware that the verb 'kneel' is derived from the noun 'knee'. Although she insists that her learners should answer in full sentences there is no evidence in the transcript that she makes them do so. Ms Hamba also makes her learners aware of the differences in the use of the pronouns 'he' and 'his'. She wants her learners to interpret the picture and leads them to critical thinking when she asks, 'What do you do when you see something burning?' With this question, she taps on her learners' general knowledge and experiences from their environment. She also asks learners to explain who fire-fighters are as she reminds them that they have learnt about fire-fighters in Life Skills. This shows that Ms Hamba is teaching across the curriculum as she incorporates Life Skills into the English lesson. She draws on the knowledge that her learners acquired in Life Skills. The learners display some knowledge of fire-fighting, which I think could have been drawn from their life experiences or previous lessons. Despite the educator's attempt at creativity, the poster lesson is repetitive and dominated by lead-on questions requiring simple knowledge level answers. There is evidence of choral response in which her learners verbally

respond in unison to her questions. Although this method may provide every learner with an opportunity to actively respond to every question posed during instruction she is likely not able to identify individual learners' learning difficulties.

Ms Fakude:

Ms Fakude's approach to literacy teaching is based on how she used to teach in the past:

You see, during those days, when we started teaching, we started with – *a – e – i – o – u* and *ma – me – mi – mo – mu*. It was alright so much because we used to go with the sounds. You start at *a e i o u* and go to *ma me mi mo mu*. But now...when a child just starts learning he meets with a big word when he doesn't know the sounds. Isn't it he starts with the sounds...nouns...phonics...and...what...now...it means those who are fast learners are the ones at advantage...children are not the same. Even if they say you drill them...you drill...you drill...but it must start right from the beginning (Interview with Ms Fakude, 2013).

Ms Fakude explains that in the past children started from phonics then they would progress to concepts. She says that nowadays children are taught 'big' words when they have not yet mastered basic phonics. She finds this method to be problematic as children who are slow learners are 'left behind' in the learning process. Although Ms Fakude's approach is entrenched in the GPLMS, she tries to make her poster teaching exciting by diverting from the 'script' in some parts as illustrated in the following example of her lesson:

- Ms Fakude: Okay class. We shall start our lesson and I will show you the chart. You will say sentences that come from chart. OK class we shall learn about animals in Zoo. *(She writes the word 'Zoo' on the board).*
- Ms Fakude: Who can tell me what a Zoo is?
- Tami: It is animal home.
- Ms Fakude: Yes. Someone else?
- Mike: They are many animals.
- Ms Fakude: What kind of animals we find in Zoo?
- Lindi: Friendly animal!
- Ms Fakude: You can play with snake?
- Lindi: Some are monkeys and we play with him.
- Ms Fakude: I want you to look at poster on board. We are going to make sentences by answering questions. We must answer question in?
- Class 3: Full!

Ms Fakude: I will make example of answering in full. Lindi tell us your name.
 Lindi: My name is Lindi.
 Ms Fakude: Good girls. You hear she answer in full *neh*?
 Class 3: Yes ma'am!
 Ms Fakude: Now I want you to look at poster and I will read you sentences and ask you questions. You must answer questions in...?
 Class 3: Full!
 Ms Fakude: OK. Now we start. The camel comes through the door. What does the camel do? Menzi?
 Menzi: The camel come through door.
 Class 3: Teacher! Teacher! Teacher!
 Ms Fakude: Ok, class let's not make noise. Let's have Lindi!
 Lindi: The camel comes through the door!
 Ms Fakude: Good girl. We continue. What comes through the door?
 Class 3: The camel comes through the door!
 Ms Fakude: I said if you know answer you must do what?
 Class 3: Put up hand!
 Ms Fakude: *Akere bana baka* (isn't my kids). You must put up your hands and answer questions one at a time. I'm sure you are not a choir, isn't it? I continue. His arm is over the fence. What is over the fence?
 Badi: Her arm is over the fence.
 Ms Fakude: Her?
 Badi: His arm is over the fence.
 Ms Fakude: We use 'her' for?
 Mandy: We use her for girl.
 Ms Fakude: Good Mandy. Whose arm is over the fence?
 Ben: His arm is over the fence.
 Ms Fakude: Good. The lions are inside the cage. What is inside the cage?
 Faith: The lions are in the cage.
 Ms Fakude: Where are the lions?
 Lindi: The lions are in cage.
 Ms Fakude: People ride on the elephant's back. Who rides on the elephant's back?
 Lindi: People ride on elephant's back.
 Ms Fakude: Where do people ride?
 Menzi: The people ride on the elephant's back
 Ms Fakude: Good boys and girls. We have learnt that when we answer questions we must answer in what?
 Class 3: In full!

Transcript 5.2: Lesson instruction in Ms Fakude's class

The above extract illustrates how Ms Fakude's approach to teaching using the chart is different from that of Ms Hamba. In her introduction she scaffolds learning as she starts from the known to the unknown, assuming that the learners seem to

know what a zoo is. She even tries to make the learners understand what a zoo is. The structure of the lesson is similar to that of other educator participants I have observed. The answers that the learners are expected to give are derived from the preceding questions that the educators ask. The educator makes a statement and then asks a question based on it. For an example she says, 'His arm is over the fence' and asks, 'what is over the fence?' The learners' responses are, 'Her arm is over the fence'. It is apparent that the questions are deliberately leading to the answers that require very little thinking. When I enquire from the educator why her lessons take this course she indicates that they are only meant to teach sentence construction not vocabulary or abstract thinking. I find the scripted lessons lacking educator creativity. To address the shortcoming of the scripted lessons, Ms Fakude tries to incorporate a lot of drawing in her teaching to compliment what she says is her learners lack of vocabulary in either their mother tongue or English. She encourages them to use drawings to illustrate their concepts.

When Ms Fakude teaches grammar instruction she deviates from the scripted lessons and barely uses a textbook. In the following example, I observe her teach different grammatical structures (e.g. subject, nouns, verb, and object). Her teaching tool is the chalk board as illustrated in Image 5.4.

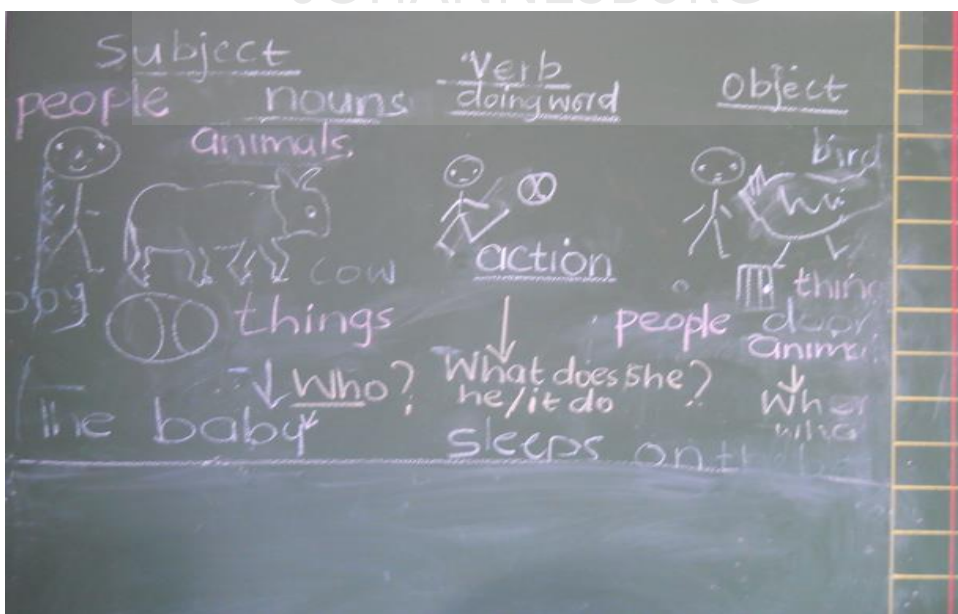


Image 5.4: Ms Fakude's grammar instruction

When teaching grammatical structures, Ms Fakude generates most of the concepts. After giving an example, she asks learners to give their own examples of the different grammatical structures that she is teaching. However, when one learner asks if he can begin a sentence with a subject, I notice that she has some difficulty in explaining the difference between subject and object. She emphatically says all sentences must always begin with only a subject. Despite this glitch, her lesson presentation seems clear as she encourages her learners to give their examples. She even uses some sketches to illustrate some concepts. With her guidance, learners construct sentences and identify different parts of speech.

Ms Dube:

Ms Dube indicated that in her approach to literacy instruction she teaches the vowel sounds first before proceeding to words and pictures. She believes that if children are first taught to match pictures with the words they have learnt then they can be able to construct sentences, based on those pictures. She explains her approaches literacy teaching:

Like when you teach reading, isn't it you start at the bottom at Grade R when a child just starts school learns through incidental learning. They learn words through colours. She can identify the symbol of 'up' even if she doesn't know how to read or write it. So if a child knows how to build words. When she learns pictures, her language develops. She uses pictures to develop concepts, her language develops and she's able to formulate simple sentences. Those are the basics (Interview with Ms Dube, 2013).

In this extract Ms Dube describes her approach to teaching literacy through association as she teaches learners to associate certain words with particular colours. She then uses pictures to help her learners develop concrete concepts as she teaches them to construct sentences based on particular pictures. In Ms Dube's classroom, there are a lot of pictures and charts of alphabet work cards pasted on the walls.



Image 5.5: Information charts

The chart pasted on the wall, Image 5.5, provides an illustration of months of the year (*Dikgwedi Tsa Ngwaga*) in both Setswana and English and provides a pictorial illustration of the alphabet. The dual language (Setswana-English) illustration can be helpful to the learners in both concept formation and spelling. Below the months of the year appears a visual representation of the alphabet, which I thought has a wider appeal to the learners. For example, I heard them recite the alphabet “a-for ant; m-for mouse; p-for pig”. However, Ms Dube says that although her learners have never seen some of the animals on the chart, they try to conceptualise them from television and use the words to construct sentences. On one of my visits to her classroom I notice her learners gathered in a corner where a sample of an array of their work is displayed. Of much interest to me are sketches of the former president of South Africa, Mr Nelson Mandela, made by

some of the learners in Ms Dube's class. Mr Mandela seems popular with the learners, as a lot of literacy work ranging from poems to sketch drawings is devoted to the man regarded as an icon in South Africa and over much of the world (Please see Image 5.6).



Image 5.6: Learner's drawing of Nelson Mandela

Through my conversations with Ms Dube and other educators, I develop an awareness of literacy practices with which the children engage in school. I also begin to consider potential challenges I would face as the study progresses.

Like Ms Dube, in her approach to teaching, Ms Hamba highlights the importance of vocabulary:

[...] we do try to expose them to as much vocabulary because they have phonics every week. And not only phonics, they read some books. They learn a specific vocabulary for the theme in that week so they do different activities for the week. There are always phonics *akere* (isn't it) but in connection with reading from books. New vocabulary is being taught to them (Interview with Ms Hamba, 2013).

The transcript that follows illustrates a vocabulary lesson conducted by Ms Dube.

Ms Dube: The boy kneels on the floor (*pointing at the picture*). Who kneels on the floor?

Class 1: The boy kneels on the floor.

Ms Dube: The boy is wearing his school uniform. Can you say that?

Class 1: The boy is wearing his school uniform.

Ms Dube: Again!

Class 1: The boy is wearing his school uniform!

Ms Dube: The word 'his' shows that the uniform belongs to the boy. Who is wearing his school uniform?

Class 1: The boy is wearing his school uniform.

Ms Dube: What is the boy wearing?

Class 1: The boy is wearing his school uniform! (*Class answers in unison*).

Ms Dube: Dad reads the newspaper with his son. Who reads the newspaper?

Class 1: Dad read newspaper with son.

Ms Dube: Again!

Class 1: Dad read newspaper with son.

Ms Dube: Again!

Class 1: Dad read newspaper with son.

Ms Dube: Good...can you show me with action?

A learner volunteers to demonstrate how one reads a newspaper and goes to the front of the class. He demonstrates with gestures and open palms, much to the amusement of the class that suppresses a giggle.

Ms Dube: What does dad read with his son?

Class 1: Dad reads newspaper with son.

Ms Dube: Good! That's the end of our lesson.

Transcript 5.3: Lesson instruction in Ms Dube's class

This lesson extract illustrates the repetitive nature of the prescribed lesson guidelines. Learning in this class is not individualised as learners provide the answers in chorus form. The educator asks simple recall questions that do not encourage critical thinking and engagement with the text. The questions do not require learners to demonstrate any form of abstract thinking or creativity as they are simple knowledge level. The educator only shows some creativity when she includes a bit of vocabulary in the lesson as she makes the learners aware how they should use the masculine possessive pronoun 'his'. Towards the end of the lesson she asks the learners to demonstrate how to read a newspaper which I think is unnecessary since that is depicted in the poster. It has to be noted that the language errors in this extract and subsequent extracts are from original

transcripts and I shall comment on them in the section on limitations of the study in Chapter 7.

Mr Kupe:

Mr Kupe is not qualified to teach foundation phase. He is a trained senior phase teacher. He reveals that he only came teach foundation phase because there was a shortage of educators. In his approach to literacy teaching he highlights the importance of phonics:

Phonics is of importance because, firstly, you have to teach the learners the sounds because without them knowing the sounds it becomes hard for them to learn how to build simple sentences. But if they know the sounds and the phonics it becomes easy for them to comprehend the language (Interview with Mr Kupe, 2013).

According to Mr Kupe, beginning with phonics can assist learners to be able to construct sentences. This can assist them in language development. He finds knowledge of word sounds important in developing comprehension.

In the next extract taken from an observation of Mr Kupe's class I also note the repetitive nature of the lesson based on the prescribed GPLMS lesson plan.

- Mr Kupe: Ok class do you remember Mr Sibanda *neh*? He's gonna join us today. Please don't be afraid to ask or answer questions. Right as I was saying a zoo is a very important place. Why?
- Conie: We find different animals.
- Mr Kupe: Good. The sentences I am going to read to you come from the poster on the wall and you will also answer questions. First of all list the different animals you see on the poster.
- Mane: Giraffe.
- Sam: Lion.
- Thabi: Camel.
- Gody: Elephant.
- Mr Kupe: Very good class. As we know some animals are kept at home and some live in the bush. Those that live at home are not dangerous and we say they are?
- Ali: Friendly!
- Mr Kupe: Yes Ali. Someone else? If an animal lives with people we say it is?
- Thabi: Tame!
- Mr Kupe: Very good Ali. Let's clap hands for him (*class claps*). And the animals that live in bush are dangerous and we say they are?

Dan: Wild!

Mr Kupe: Excellent Dan. Let's give him a hand too. (*Class claps*). Now we begin our sentences. You must look at the poster very carefully. The camel comes through the door. What does the camel do? Ali?

Ali: The camel come through the door.

Mr Kupe: Very good but we say 'comes' not 'come'. Now I continue. What comes through the door?

Tumelo: The camel comes through the door.

Mr Kupe: Good girl. His arm is over the fence. What is over the fence?

Felie: His arm is over the fence.

Mr Kupe: Good Felie. She works at the zoo. Where does she work?

Tumelo: She works at the zoo.

Mr Kupe: Where does she work?

Tumelo: She works at the zoo.

Mr Kupe: Who works at the Zoo?

Mark: She works at the zoo.

Mr Kupe: The lions are inside the cage. What is inside the cage?

Dan: The lions are inside the cage.

Mr Kupe: Where are the lions?

Lily: The lions are inside the cage.

Mr Kupe: People ride on elephant's back. Who rides on elephant's back?

Tumelo: People ride on elephant's back.

Mr Kupe: Where do people ride?

Lily: People ride on elephant's back.

Mr Kupe: Good girls and boys. As your homework I want you to make five good sentences with the following words on the board: *tiger, tree, fence, tame, wild*. Write them in your homework exercise books. We will see who brings best sentences.

Transcript 5.4: Lesson instruction in Mr Kupe's class

The above extract shows that Mr Kupe's approach to poster teaching is also different from that of other educators in the grade. In his approach, he first taps the learners' knowledge as he first asks them to identify different animals illustrated in the poster. He further explains the difference between domestic and wild animals. Mr Kupe tells the learners that the lesson is about sentence construction. He seems particular about proper language use as he points out incorrect verb form when Ali says, "The camel come through the door". He corrects him by saying, "Very good but we say 'comes' not 'come'" although he does not explain why that verb has to be in that form. At the end of the lesson he asks his learners to apply the knowledge that they have gained to demonstrate

their understanding of words by constructing sentences of their own. Mr Kupe seems to be knowledgeable of the current teaching practices as he code-switches to ensure that his learners understand what he is teaching through. He explains in Setswana the English concepts that his learners do not understand. I think this approach helps the learners who cannot comprehend English to understand some concepts. A number of classroom based studies have found the practices of code-switching, translation and 'translanguaging' in classrooms to be helpful to learners in coping with the demands of learning in an additional language (Probyn, 2009; Setati, Adler, Reed & Bapoo, 2002; Brock-Unte & Holmarscottir, 2004). Contrary to his belief that his learners can understand concepts explained in Setswana, he encourages his learners to use English most in his class. He indicates that he deliberately goes against the Department of Education policy of home language teaching by using English as a dominant language of instruction as he believes that his learners have much exposure to English. According to the Department of Basic Education, learners in the foundation phase (Grades 1-3) must be taught in their preferred home language. However, in most township schools like Kutlwano Primary, educators prefer English as the medium of instruction in the early grades despite their (educators') limited proficiency in the language (Evans & Cleghorn, 2010; Cassoo & Fleisch, 2000). For example, in their study of English Language, Nel and Muller (2010) found that the errors of the educators permeated to their learners. Educators' preference of English as medium of instruction is encouraged by some parents who believe their children should be introduced to English in school early (Stein & Mamabolo, 2005; De Klerk, 2002).

Mr Kupe's approach to teaching phonics is not different from that of other 3rd Grade educators in his school. In Mr Kupe's class learners give answers in chorus form. In that way, he is unable to determine if all the learners are able to pronounce the words correctly. As per the prescribed lesson plan, the educator models pronunciation and the learners imitate his pronunciation. Given the class size, the educator can determine individual children's pronunciation by employing exercises which are both accessible and enjoyable for learners, where they do a

freer speaking activities aimed at developing their spoken fluency in the language. In Mr Kupe's lesson he tries modelling concepts to help the learners develop their oral language skills as they learn speech sounds that are derived from the English alphabet. Research shows that phonemic awareness is important in foundation phase because English is based on the alphabetic principle (Bernstein & Ellis, 2000). This is different from the whole language approach of the 1980s and 1990s. These years were characterised by the whole language movement and a call to re-examine beliefs and practices related to early childhood reading development (Pearson, 2004). Phonics instruction started coming into the curriculum in the 1970's. The emphasis on 'basics' in the 1970's was associated with higher reading achievement scores (Pearson, 2004). Mr Kupe's teaching is likely to have very low levels of success as his lessons are repetitive. The probing questions that he asks are simple recall questions and do not encourage critical thinking. Mr Kupe seems to be using chorusing and rhythmic chanting approach. In Hoadley's (2008) research into literacy practices in South African classrooms confirms that chorusing and rhythmic chanting in classrooms were common strategies in what she describes as a 'strongly communalised pedagogy'. She found absence of individual, evaluated performances, what Hornberger and Chick (2001) term 'safe-talk', which is a strategy used to mask both teacher's and students' poor command of English and their lack of understanding of academic content. In their study, Evans and Cleghorn (2010) also found that when teachers are compelled to teach in a language they do not know well, the tendency is to use non-communicative, rote 'safe talk' practices (Cummins & Hornberger, 2007; Hornberger & Chick, 2001). In a sense, 'safe talk' represents a form of learning that enables them to hide the absence of substance. According to Pretorius (2002: 191) learners in foundation phase are disadvantaged by poor language teaching by educators whose own English proficiency is limited.

Ms Tafane:

In her approach to literacy teaching, Ms Tafane says she mostly focuses on phonics. She, however points out that although learners do phonics every week and read books, there is general poor literacy competence in the foundation

phase. Some learners in her class cannot express themselves well in English and they also cannot “read a simple bedtime story *tša ko crèche* [of crèche]”. Ms Tafane says her learners’ reading competence is so poor that they cannot read even at crèche or pre-school level. She suggests that educators should go “back to basics”. By going back to basics Ms Tafane means educators should:

[...] start with phonics in learners’ home language before doing difficult English. I don’t mean *baseka ba dira se kgowa* (that they must not do English) but they must master their home language first. Reading lessons must be longer and a lot of spelling exercises must be done (Interview with Ms Tafane, 2013).

In her comment, Ms Tafane offers a solution to her learners’ inability to express themselves well in English. She suggests they should be first taught phonics in their home language. She believes that the mastery of home language is key to literacy development as outlined in the Language in Education Policy that “the underlying principle is to maintain home language” (DoE, 1997: 4). According to Ms Tafane, children must be given more reading and spelling lessons and exercises to improve their reading ability. I observed that in all the classes children were given a short spelling test every Friday. Ms Tafane, however, complains that most of her learners perform poorly in the spelling test although they are given the whole week to practice the words as homework. She attributes the learner’s failure to do the spelling homework to lack of parental support and intervention. On the issue of lack of parental support with homework, the parents cited lack of time or skills as their reasons for failing to assist their children with homework.

On my visit to Ms Tafane’s class, I observe her teaching story-telling through ‘read aloud’. Read-aloud is a teaching strategy where the educator reads to the whole class, building on learners’ existing skills of listening, while introducing different types of literature and concepts (Dorn & Soffos, 2005). Read alouds can serve many instructional purposes such as “to motivate, encourage, excite, build background, develop comprehension, assist children in making connections, and serve as a model of what fluent reading sounds like” (Wadsworth, 2008: 1). In the read-aloud approach used by Ms Tafane, she constantly pauses to ask questions

and make observations (Allen, 2000). In this approach, she teaches listening and comprehension.

The following extract exemplifies, Ms Tafane's 'read aloud' lesson:

Ms Tafane: Teacher is going to read for you and you are going to listen. You are going to do what?

Class 5: Listen!

Ms Tafane: And after listening, you are going to do what?

Class 5: Answer questions!

Ms Tafane: Are you listening now because I'm going to start now?

Class 5: Yes, ma'am!

Ms Tafane: "One day two tiny grey mice were watching a huge strong lion sleeping in the sun. 'Run over his nose', said one mouse 'and see if he wakes up.'" Do you hear what they're saying, two tiny mice? *Intho e huge ke e big neh* (Something huge is something very big, isn't it). I will continue, "And one says run over his nose and see if he wakes up".

Class 5: *(laughs)*

Ms Tafane: Hey, Nkululeko, stop fighting for something that is not useful. You can't wait for me to finish the story so that you can look for your plastic container. *(Reprimanding the learner who appears to be looking for something)*. *Ehe*, now I'm continuing... "So the silly mouse ran over the lion's nose" ...*e kaye thupa ela*...where's that stick *bathong*? *(Getting irritated by the learners disrupting the lesson)*... "So the silly little mouse ran over the lion's nose"... and what happened? "Of course the lion woke and caught the mouse in his big paw". If you were mouse what would you do?

Learner 4: I will scream.

Ms Tafane: Scream for what? Isn't it you are a silly little mouse and you wanted to see what the lion will do? "The huge lion was upset and was going to eat the small mouse. 'Oh, please don't eat me' begged the small mouse. 'Please don't eat me. One day I will help you. The lion laughed, 'ha ha ha...you are too small to help me. You are too small to help anyone little mouse. You can't help me'. He was not really hungry so the lion let the mouse go. Sooner after that the lion was running in the veldt. Suddenly, he ran into a trap that the hunters had made to catch the buck. It was a net and the lion was caught fast. He couldn't move but roared 'grrrrr...ho ho ho hooo...help help', he roared. 'Save me from this trap'. The buck walked by, 'I won't help you' said the buck. 'Last week you ate my brother. I won't help you'. A rabbit walked by, 'I won't help you too', said the rabbit. 'Last week you ate my mother'". So how bad is lion? He ate the buck's brother and he also ate rabbit's mother. "So the little grey mouse came

- by. 'You didn't eat me last week. I will help you'". Remember what the lion said. You remember that?
- Class 5: Yes!
- Ms Tafane: And now the mouse is the one that is going to help who?
- Class 5: The lion!
- Ms Tafane: *Ehe... "The little grey mouse chewed at the net"...e etsang...ke bone gore meno a lona a lekana le a peba? (Doing what...let me see if your teeth are as big as mouse's?) (Joking with the class).*
- Class 5: *(All learners grin, showing their teeth)*
- Ms Tafane: *Yoh, you all have very big teeth. That means there's no little mouse in this class but only the lions (laughing). OK listen. "The mouse was chewing the net. He chewed and chewed. Late in the afternoon the hole was big enough for the lion to climb out. 'Thank you little friend. Now I know that little animals can help big animals like me", said who?*
- Class 5: Lion!
- Ms Tafane: Why?
- Learner 5: The lions are not always strong.
- Ms Tafane: The lions are not always strong. So what do we learn from this story between lion and mouse? What do we learn? Masha?
- Masha: Even if she is little, she can't eat me.
- Ms Tafane: Who is little? She's pointing at you and is saying you are a 'she'...are you a she? Boy or girl?
- Dudu: My baby brother, when he has to say 'he' to a boy he says 'she'.
- Ms Tafane: So what do we learn from the story? Thandi!
- Thandi: I learn to...I must help others.
- Ms Tafane: Thandi!
- Thandi: I learn that even little things can help others
- Peter: I learn that I must not eat others *(Class laughs)*
- Tim: Are you an animal? *(Whole class laughs)*
- Ms Tafane: Stop that you two. Ok? The most important thing is to learn to help each other. That's what help each other (means) whether you are like Thato and like beating others. There will be day you will need their help. One day you will have to write a test and you don't have a pen. You have to go and borrow from that tiny tiny little girl who you always insult...who you always call by silly names. One day you will need their help and they will say 'no how can you borrow a pen from a stoke sweet'. So you have to learn to help and respect each other. So the first question is 'What is the best title for the story that?' The best best title for the story that we have read. What is it?
- Thandi: The lion and the mouse.
- Ms Tafane: The lion and the....?
- Class 5: Mouse!
- Ms Tafane: And *wena* (you) what do you want to say? *(Pointing at another learner)*
- Pitso: Big lion and tiny mouse.

Ms Tafane: Big lion and tiny mouse? Neo?

Neo: The little tiny mice

Ms Tafane: Ok. There's someone who said 'the lion and the...?'

Class 5: Mouse!

Ms Tafane: Who said that?

Class 5: Kabelo!

Ms Tafane: Let's clap hands for him (*class claps*)

Ms Tafane: Who is the main character in the story? Who is the main main character who appear several times in the story? Lihle!

Lihle: Lion.

Ms Tafane: *O mongwe hape!* (Another one)

Queen: Mouse

Mark: Rabbit

Ms Tafane: Lion is our correct answer. Where does our story take place? Where?

Noma: Farm.

Lihle: Jungle!

Pitso: Zoo!

Ms Tafane: Let's listen again...let's listen again. "One day two tiny grey mice were watching a huge lion sleeping in the veldt...." Where did the story took place?

Class 5: In the veldt!

Ms Tafane: Good! The second question is "How did the lion escape from the trap?" Nothando!

Notha: By the hole the mouse had made.

Ken: Tiny mouse help.

Ms Tafane: How did tiny mouse help?

Ken: By eating the net

Ms Tafane: He eat? You eat and swallow a net? Yes John.

John: The little mouse bite the mouse (whole class burst in laughter)

Ms Tafane: *Yoh lona* (Hey you), what did you eat this morning?

Class 5: Teacher! Teacher! Teacher!

Ms Tafane: Yes Tami!

Tami: The little mouse helped by biting the net.

Ms Tafane: Noooo! Yes, Neo!

Neo: The little mouse helped by chewing.

Ms Tafane: Chewing the net. It chewed and chewed. Let's go back to the story. Let's listen. "The little mouse chewed the net..." So Neo is correct. Our answer is 'the mouse chewed the rope and set the lion free. The answers are here. You have to circle the right one. Tell if the statement is true or false. "The lion needed help from the mouse'. Is it true or false?

Class 5: True!

Ms Tafane: Give a reason for your answer. How did the lion need help? How did the lion need help from the mouse?

Phendu: The lion was trapped!

Ms Tafane: You have to give a reason.

- Ms Tafane: *Ansa ya gago e tswarisa flue* (Your answer gives me a flu). The lion was trapped in the net. Answer the following questions. 'What did the grey mouse do to wake the lion up?' this grey mouse, the naughty one. What did they do to wake the lion up?
- Paul: Mouse was going.
- Ms Tafane: *Yoh lona!* (Yoh you) Yes, Phendu!
- Phendu: The lion was walking on the inside nose.
- Neo: The mouse ran over the lion's nose.

Transcript 5.6: Lesson instruction in Ms Tafane's class

Although Ms Tafane's learners do not 'share' the reading with her, the transcript exemplifies how she makes the story fun by giving examples that her learners can relate to. Her reading and interpretation of events in the story is dramatic. She even highlights the moral of the story. Throughout the lesson she asks learners critical questions that require their opinion. It is also obvious from the extract that while her English can be understood, it is not always grammatical.

To conclude this section, attention is drawn to the fact that the basis for selecting the excerpts in Section 5.4 is that they are mainly typical of what was observed over the course of the study and partly what the educators said during the interviews. In summary, some of the strategies used by the foundation phase educators are the chorus method and using the teaching poster, described and explained in Section 5.4., which is one of the major teaching strategies in foundation phase. It features in all the lessons that I observed. The main skills deduced when teaching with the posters are listening and speaking, which proceeds to creative writing. Classroom literacy events in this study mainly meant focus on phonemic awareness although that is not obvious from the transcripts. This highlights shortcoming in teaching phonemic awareness. Research has consistently shown that phonological awareness is a strong predictor of early reading success (Ehri & Nunes, 2002; Muter & Diethelm, 2001). This applies to both home language and First Additional Language reading. Research has demonstrated that children with good phonemic awareness can learn to read and write more easily than children who struggle to hear these sound differences (Pretorius, Jackson, McKay & Spaul, 2016: 11b). The GPLMS approach seems not

to be developmental in classroom practice as it promotes rote learning, discouraging critical thinking. Even though the strategy allows educator dominance it discourages educator autonomy to employ an alternative pedagogy suitable for learners of different abilities. The overall sentiments expressed by the educators in the study focus on the failure of the GPLMS to address the needs of both the teaching and assessment requirements.

5.5 Classroom literacy practices

In this section I present the focal learners' literacy practices in the classroom. My inquiry into these practices is through classroom observations and discussions I had with the learners at their homes as I sought to understand the texts they produced at school. I use a brief description as a sub-heading to introduce the theme characterising each particular learner.

Lindi the Zulu girl:

Lindi, the Zulu first language child from Kwa-Zulu Natal, is in Ms Hamba's Zulu-medium class. As presented in Chapter 4, Lindi is competent in reading Zulu texts. I observe her reading isiZulu with her peers. She constantly corrects her peers' pronunciation of words with the 'q' click sounds¹⁹. While explaining how her learners find reading Zulu difficult, Ms Hamba singles out Lindi as the best example of a perfect Zulu speaker, "*IsiZulu sakhe asifani nalesi esasemaLok'shini. Uyasizwa nawe ukuthi ngesomZulu phaqa*" [Her Zulu is different from that of the townships. You can hear that hers is of a pure Zulu]. During class 'read aloud' she is always the first to volunteer to read and her educator deliberately allows her to read a larger portion of the text. On some occasions, her twin sister who is the same class, takes over the reading. Lindi excels in the weekly isiZulu spelling tests. However, she does not participate much in English discussion as she usually code-switches to Zulu and her classmates laugh at her. At home, Lindi is assisted with her homework by one of the tenants who is a volunteer in the local clinic. Her

¹⁹ The **palatal click, q**, is produced by putting the tip of the tongue against the roof of the mouth and snapping it downward in a "clap!" sound (<https://www.csmonitor.com/Technology/2013/0304/Miriam-Makeba-What-s-up-with-that-clicking-sound-anyway>)

grandmother who only has a fourth grade education does not mediate Lindi and her sister's homework. In my interview with her, she resignedly just said, "*Mina ndiliqaba*" [I am uneducated].

Katlego the mathematician:

Katlego is in Ms Tafane's class. He performs well in class most mathematics class tests. Unlike his classmates, he does not use his fingers when calculation addition and subtraction sums. Although Katlego is said to be performing well in mathematics, his performance in both English and Setswana is weak. In her class, Ms Tafane calls learners to her desk to do guided reading. As has been explained by his mother, Katlego's reading ability is very weak. Evidence from his written work shows that he has problems with spelling and constructing sentences in English as can be seen in the following extract from his English classwork book:

1. *chuch. I ma going to chuch ava soday*
2. *chips. I lika to eut chips*
3. *where. I where my pijamas*
4. *walk. Walk a pa*
5. *wash. Wash an ya doing*
6. *shops. I like to eat shops*
7. *eat. I lake food*

In this exercise, Katlego was supposed to construct sentences using given words. The example of Katlego's work suggests that he has problems with spelling and grammar as all his sentences have several errors. Although his performance seems well below first grade level he was promoted to the third grade. Mr Kupe, explained to me how learners who are not ready for the next grade are promoted:

The Department is not supportive to us. Our hands are tied. You cannot fail a child. They allow even those who can't write their names to proceed to next grade. As a teacher you are given a tough time if you want to retain a learner. They want evidence otherwise the learner must proceed. That's why we have high failure in foundation phase (Interview with Mr Kupe, 2013).

According to Mr Kupe, learners who are not ready to proceed to the next grade are allowed to proceed as they are “not allowed to fail”. In my further enquiry regarding the teachers not allowed to ‘fail’ a learner, Mr Kupe indicates that District officials require substantial evidence of interventions that were administered on learners who have to be retained. I find this problematic as it is obvious that the learners who ‘pass’ or are made to pass the school-based assessments are not ready to take the standardised government assessment tests such as Annual National Assessment. The Annual National Assessment results are used as the yardstick for the classification of schools as underperforming or not. The low performance levels of learners in ANA explains the reason the school is classified as poorly performing (PPS).

Although Katlego seems to be performing poorly in language he seems better on pictorial illustration of his concepts as can be seen in the following image from his exercise books:

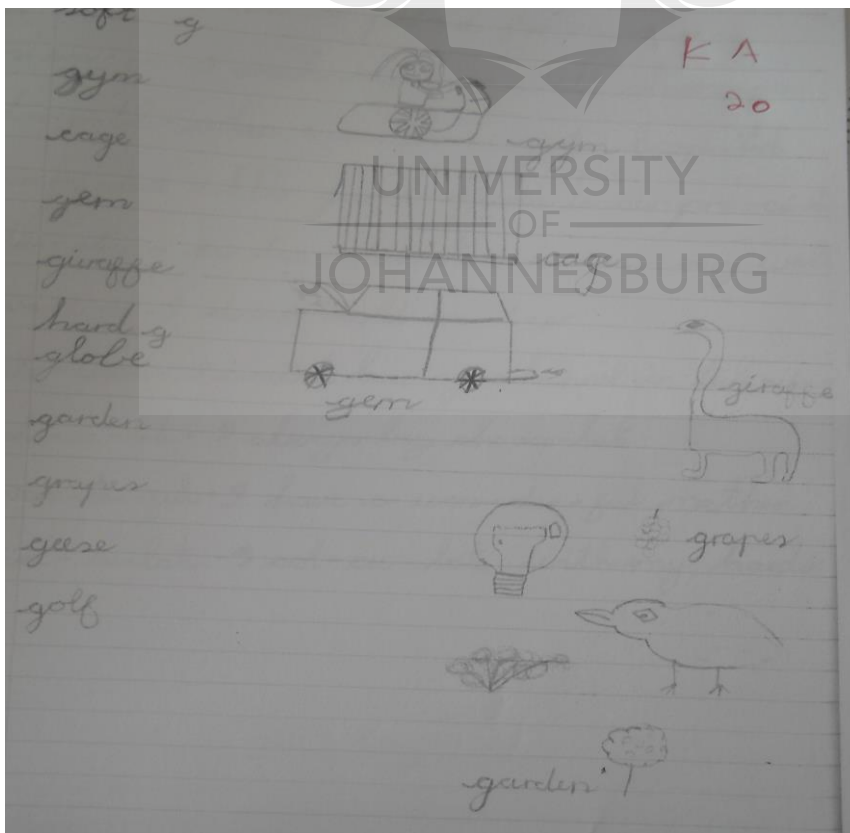


Image 5.7: Katlego’s drawing

As can be seen in image 5.7, Katlego seems to have a better illustration of phonics through drawing. Through his drawings he is able to associate the name of images with the sounds in the words. As suggested by Hopperstad (2010), Katlego's drawings convey meaning and help him to articulate his ideas and understanding of words in different ways to verbal language. This allows him to communicate his understanding and interpretations of the world (Danko-McGhee, & Slutsky, 2003).

Thandi the fashion designer:

Although Thandi is Zulu speaking, she is in Ms Tafane's Setswana medium class. As presented in Chapter 4, Thandi likes drawing and would like to become a fashion designer one day. There seems to be correlation between her out-of-school literacy practices and her school practices. At home she cuts pictures from magazines to illustrate fashion trends. These pictures are meant to augment stories in the magazines. Thandi is able to read these stories written in English. The stories that Thandi reads seem to enrich her vocabulary as stories from newspapers and magazines are known to be "linguistically up-to-date and provide valuable linguistic data" (Tafari, 2004). By using pictures from magazines to illustrate concepts she has learnt in class, Thandi extends her home literacy practice to school. Image 5.8, extracted from her writing book shows how Thandi matches words with particular pictures.

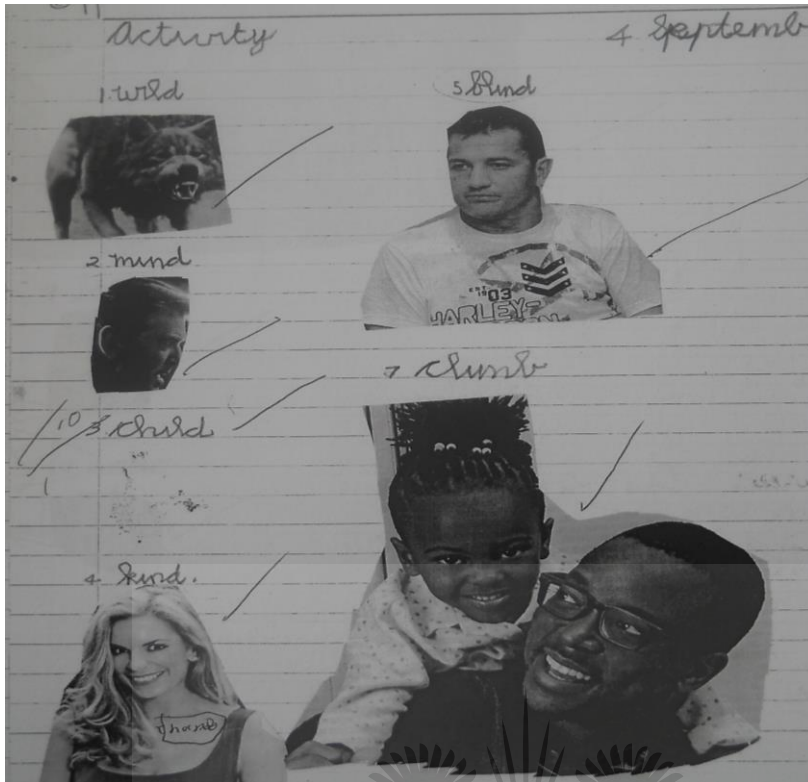


Image 5.8: Thandi's picture illustrations

Thandi's understanding of words is not only limited to iconic images but extends to writing. She constructs well-structured sentences. Her written English is better than Katlego's. Her sentences are well constructed as can be seen in the following example taken from her writing book.

1. *thumb* His thumb is painful
2. *limb* A head is a body limb
3. *bomb* There was a big bomb blast
4. *dumb* The boy is dumb
5. *lamb* Mary has a little lamb
6. *crumb* I ate a bead crumb
7. *climb* The girl climb a tree to hide
8. *comb* The comb is black in colour
9. *little* Thenyo has a little fist
10. *only* We will only go tomorrow.

Except for the underlined spelling error (*bead-bread*) and the incorrect word choice (*little-small*), Thandi's sentences are well-constructed if compared with Katlego's, which are riddled with errors. Her sentences show considerable competence in English linguistic structure. With the aim to gain further understanding of Thandi's school literacy practices extracted from her writing book, I had the following interaction with her:

- R: Where did you get the words you used in sentences?
Thandi: Teacher writes it on board and we learn it and make sentences. Can I read them to you?
R: Yes you can you read to me.
Thandi: 'Granny says uncle is going to slaughter a cow'.
R: That's good. What is to slaughter?
Thandi: Hmm...I forget (*she changes the subject and proudly flips the pages*)
Teacher, look at my Life Skills book.
R: Wow, that's nice...what do you learn in Life Skills?
Thandi: We learn how to protect yourself...like if you are in a taxi and you eat something. You don't throw it out. You gonna disturb others.
R: That's great...can you explain why you matched 'rain' with 'people' in this exercise
Thandi: Rain gets into their houses and their blankets get wet.
R: Oh I see...what is silt?
Thandi: It is salt.
R: Oh, I see. In this exercise you drew some symbols. What do they mean?
Thandi: These are churches. I am a Christian.
R: What does Hindu mean?
Thandi: Hindu means they talk other languages not Christian.
R: Here you did an exercise on 'Animals that help us'
Thandi: Yes, we get milk from cow and eat it.
R: Do we eat or drink milk.
Thandi: Teacher say we must say eat or use.
R: Oh, I see. And you did this exercise 'Say whether it's a statement or question or command'. What is a command?
Thandi: I think it is to force.
R: Blind? What does blind mean?
Thandi: In the story it said 'blind'...I don't know.
R: OK. Blind means unable to see like other people. And the word 'mind'?
Thandi: It is in his head.
R: 'kind'
Thandi: It's me (*she giggles shyly*)
R: I see you did an exercise on 'prefixes'. What is a prefix?
Thandi: It means to add in front.

- R: Why do we add in front?
Thandi: We add to form opposite.
R: Hmm...not always...repaint...does it mean to remove paint.
Thandi: I don't know (she laughs)

Transcript 5.6: Researcher's interaction with Thandi

In my interaction with Thandi, she demonstrates a critical understanding of most of her written work. Although Thandi seems to have forgotten the meaning of 'slaughter', her well-structured sentences show her contextual understanding of the word. Her ability to match 'rain' with 'people' and associating rain water with wet blankets suggests her experiences in the township as most roofs of the houses are said to leak when it rains. Her lack of understanding of prefixes might be resulting from the basic explanation given by her educator. Her lack of knowledge could be the reason for her associating religion with language, 'Hindu means they talk other languages not Christian'. As a non-native speaker of English and just learning the language, Thandi displays a conceptual error, 'Yes, we get milk from cow and eat it'. She alleges that it is what her educator taught them to say.

Mashudu the reading wizard:

Mashudu is in Ms Fakude's Setswana class. As mentioned earlier, Mashudu is from a print-rich environment where she has access to reading books given to her by her mother, Ms Dube who is an educator. During English shared reading, Mashudu always volunteers to read. She reads with confidence as her mother explains that:

I don't recall reading to my child. She's the one who reads to us. If I read to her it is home language because she doesn't know Setswana well. She reads English on her own. Isn't it I'm a teacher so I bring material from school for her to read? I taught her to read at a very young age.

In class I observe that she likes explaining difficult English words to other learners. In my interactions with her, Mashudu explains that she knows most of the stories they read in class. She has read most of the prescribed books that they read in class. Her mother has brought her the books to read at home or she has taken them from the library. Like Lindi, Mashudu also volunteers to read aloud in class. When they do group 'shared reading' she is impatient with her peers who stutter

when reading. She both corrects them and insists on proper pronunciation or takes over the reading of the whole text. I observe her doing shared reading of the book illustrated in Image 5.9:

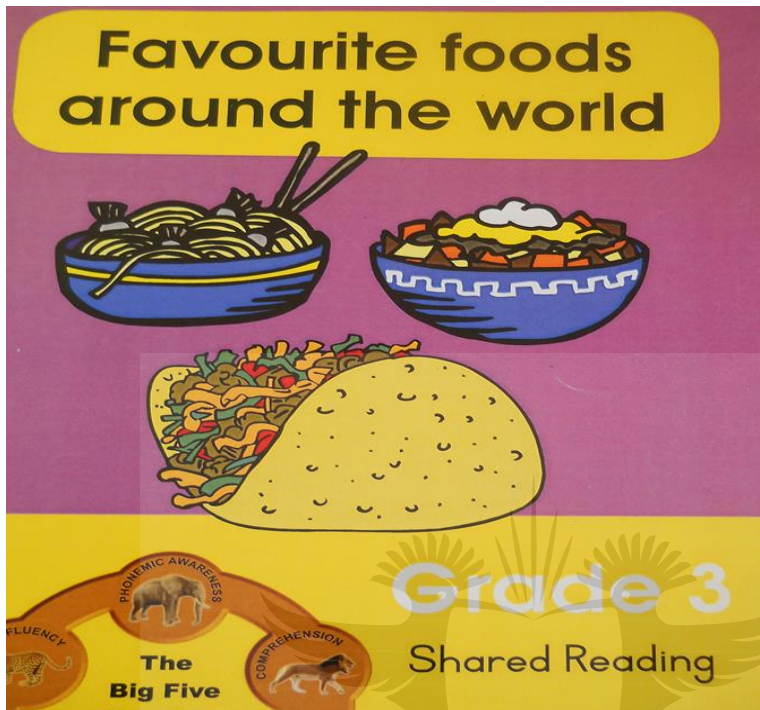


Image 5.9: Shared reading book

'Foods around the World' is a book about a variety of foods enjoyed by different cultures around the world. The book introduces a variety of ethnic foods and provides examples of fun recipes for readers to try.

Mashudu seems to be doing well in sentence construction. An example of Mashudu's written work is presented in the following:

1. *playful.* Our teacher don't like playful children.
2. *helpful.* I am helpful to my mother.
3. colouful. We drew a colouful picture.
4. *hopeful.* We are hopeful to pass Grade 3.
5. *Kindness.* Mulumbu had kindness to the dog.
6. *Goodness.* The is goodness with vegetables.
7. *Sweetness.* There is lots of sweetness.

Despite a few errors, most of Mashudu’s sentences are well structured and well-constructed like Thandi’s.

Tumelo the girl from Mafikeng:

Tumelo is Setswana speaking girl. She has attended the first two years of her schooling in Mafikeng, a predominately Setswana-speaking place in the Northwest Province. As she speaks what is considered standard Setswana, her educator always asks her to read aloud to the class. In class she assists other learners with Setswana, particularly with meaning of words from the language book *Monate wa Setswana* (Image 5.10).



Image 5.10: Setswana reader

Like the other learners in the study, Tumelo chooses to illustrate her concepts through drawing (Image 5.11).



Image 5.11: Tumelo's drawing

In summary, the learners' classroom practices are characterised with reading texts in class and writing. All the learners prefer illustrating their concepts through drawing. They use drawings as symbols to create meaning. Many researchers including Hope (2008), and Anning and Ring (2004) have pointed out that children use drawing to develop, create, communicate and record their thoughts. According to Wright (2007), drawing gives children the opportunity to create, share, and convey meaning. "Drawing acts as bridge between the inner world of imagination and reason and the outer world of communication and sharing of ideas" (Hope, 2008: 11). According to the educators, in this study, learners are not restricted on what things to draw to illustrate their concepts. Drawing as a means to demonstrate understanding is prescribed in the Gauteng Province Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS) discussed in the following section.

5.6 The Gauteng Province Literacy and Mathematics Strategy in the classroom

Because Kutlwano Primary is classified as a poorly performing school, classroom instruction is guided by the Gauteng Province Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS). In my interaction with the educators they express different views on the

GPLMS. In the following section, I present the implications of the GPLMS strategy from the perspectives of District Officials and educators. Four of the five educators that I interviewed expressed negative views towards GPLMS. Ms Dube complained that:

It is a lot of work for the teachers. They expect that you do about four activities a day. Learners get tired and bored. They don't even complete the activities. The teacher is expected to follow a teaching programme which has a date and time when it must be covered. Even if children don't understand, you just move on to the next lesson (Interview with Ms Dube, 2013).

In Ms Dube's view, the GPLMS programme gives educators a lot of work as they are expected to administer too many activities within a short time. Although learners may not comprehend the lesson, the educators have to rush through the work in order not to fall behind the schedule. Ms Fakude also expressed sentiments similar to Ms Dube's that the GPLMS programme forces educators to teach at a very fast pace which leaves the slow learners behind, which is not the case in other provinces:

Yoh...it's my first time to teach GPLMS. Where I am from, it wasn't there. GPLMS is very fast. It can leave the child behind because maths has day one-day two. There's that flash note book and maths DBE so a child is supposed to write here and there and there...today...tomorrow and the following day. Each day has its own work. You are supposed to follow this GPLMS planning. It's nice because you don't plan. All work is planned for you but the pace is too fast. It affects the teacher's creativity. Lesson one has its own date, lesson two has its own date...there's today's work, tomorrow's work...English...maths (Interview with Ms Fakude, 2013).

Ms Fakude reveals that it is her first time implementing an intervention programme. The educators I interviewed in this study expressed concern that the Annual National Assessments (ANA) do not cover what is taught in GPLMS because ANA is a national assessment whereas GPLMS is a provincial literacy strategy. Thus there is little alignment between the various strategies and tasks. Mr Kupe also reveals that the GPLMS is very helpful to educators. He finds the only problem with the GPLMS programme as having a lot of activities that learners have to do within a short time. On the contrary, Ms Hamba finds the GPLMS valuable as she thinks that it helps to improve the learners' performance in Annual National

Assessments (ANA). She also finds the teaching strategies helpful to educators since all the planning is done for them.

Drawing on the educator's views, some observations can be made about the implementation of GPLMS in poorly performing schools (PPS). I find the programming failing to address the problems in the PPS. The provincial education department shows lack of consideration of the lived experiences within disadvantaged classrooms as it insists on performance of high standard where conditions such as overcrowding and shortage of learning and teaching material exist. The fast pacing of lessons that is cited by the educators is problematic as it overlooks the diversity of learners of mixed ability. The majority of learners are slow so they are 'left behind' in terms of curriculum coverage. This is evident in the poor performance of learners in the ANA.

Theoretically, GPLMS was introduced to assist the PPS schools improve their literacy levels. It targeted mostly township schools that attained below 50% in ANA. The strategy is meant to encourage systematised collaborative teaching as teachers use the same approach to mathematics and literacy teaching. The lesson plans are meant to help teachers with standardised lesson plans for effective teaching. The assessments accompanying the lesson plans are meant to address the demands of CAPS as well as prepare learners for ANA. The Annual National Assessments (ANA) are formal assessments that measure learner success. The GPLMS strategy are meant to ensure that educators teach the same content at the same time in order to prepare learners for ANA.

5.7 Teaching towards the Annual National Assessments

One of the themes that emerged from my data was the problem of the Annual National Assessments (ANA). As discussed in Chapter 2, Annual National Assessments (ANA) are an assessment instrument introduced by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in 2011 to enable a systemic evaluation of education performance and thereby enhance learner achievement in schools. Since its inception, ANA have been written annually. In 2012 all learners from Grades 1 to 6 and Grade 9 were assessed. ANA targets literacy and numeracy skills because

these have been found universally to be the key foundational skills for successful learning in school and beyond (DBE, 2012). However, there have been complaints that the results of ANA are not being used for the purposes they were intended for; it is argued that the results are used to assess teacher competency, and to categorise schools as performing or underperforming as in the case of Kutlwano Primary School where this study takes place. The school was classified as a poorly performing school as it failed to meet the minimum benchmark in the ANA. Educators also complain that ANA consumes much time, thereby hampering the smooth running of teaching and learning.

One major criticism of ANA is that in reality, the assessment practices of educators are dominated by a practice of recording and reporting of learners' scores, with limited focus on the use of assessment to address learning needs. ANA thus reinforces the practice of 'teaching to the test', where educational success is measured by the achievement of scores and statistical interpretation of results. Mr Nunu, the GDE official I first interviewed, describes ANA as a successful system because it ensures educators, HODs and Principals are held accountable for poor learner performance. According to him, ANA are able to keep track of the levels of literacy in order to identify the gaps in individual schools. His criticism is that ANA forces educators to just teach for ANA. There is contradiction in Mr Nunu's perception. He perceives the success of ANA in terms of being an educator quality or performance monitoring instrument whereas he admits it falls short in ensuring effective teaching and curriculum delivery. The contradiction implies that the Department of Education concentrates more on the diagnosis of the problem and less on addressing the problem, which is the poor performance of learners. He seems to echo the views of SADTU that ANA is not used as a diagnostic tool to identify learner needs or weaknesses in the system or in schools or educators but it is used to classify schools as performing or underperforming. On the other hand, one of the educators, Ms Hamba is also positive about ANA as she find it helpful to educators in abling them to compare their school with other schools. According to her, the results their learners attain motivate educators to establish the areas their school has to improve on. Her criticism of ANA is that the system forces

educators to concentrate on how to make learners pass ANA at the expense of teaching for understanding. On the other hand, Ms Tafane indicates that the introduction of the ANA was meant to address the poor literacy levels in the schools, but she finds the ANA questions too abstract and different from classroom practices. She complains that learners are unfamiliar with the terminology used in the assessments and some educators even find it challenging. Learners in Grade 3 are given about 20 questions to practise but the questions in the assessment papers are too long. She also alleges that most educators assist their learners to complete the assessments. This dishonesty, she says, is caused by too much pressure from policy makers on educators to make learners pass at all cost. Ms Tafane expresses pessimism of ANA as she alleges that,

Learners are passive participants in the evaluation of a failing policy. Honestly, it does not show whether the learners are literate or not. Quality control of the test papers is very poor. Assessment papers in African languages have very poor language competence. It is obvious that the examiners are just hand-picked buddies of policy makers, who speak township lingua far different from standard language.

Mr Kupe concurs with Ms Tafane that the ANA differ from classroom instruction as he indicates that his school is following the GPLMS programme but the ANA question papers do not reflect anything covered in the GPLMS. That disharmony causes classroom instruction to be divorced and irrelevant from what is evaluated in ANA. He indicates that although educators have advised the Department of Education officials in charge of the GPLMS to work together with those who set the ANA so that everything that is taught in GPLMS is assessed in ANA, to date nothing has been done. Mr Nunu, the GDE official, views ANA results as:

A political gamble where the government is trying to give credibility to its failed policies. The results are embarrassingly 'doctored' to give a false impression that there's a massive improvement in our system. There are so many cases of reported suspected cheating by both teachers and learners which are swept under the carpet. The department of education places schools under tremendous threat that teachers even literally read questions for the learners and literally give those correct answers. Who would like his school to be classified as PPS? Actual classroom teaching is overshadowed by just teaching for ANA as teachers drill their learners almost every day to help them pass with better results.

Nunu's view that ANA is a 'political gamble where the government is trying to give credibility to its failed policies' summarises the extent of failure of the programme. The ANA seem to be a politicised programme where government tries to score political points, claiming credit for 'improving' the quality of education. For example, Mr Nunu's allegation that results are 'embarrassingly doctored' suggests that the ANA results may lack validity, as he alleges that they may be manipulated in order to authentic the government's failed education policies. He also cites cases of suspected cheating or where learners are actually helped to write the assessments as educators try to avoid having their schools labelled as 'underperforming'. All the educators that were interviewed in this study complained that the ANA question papers are too long and most of the questions are the same every year. The issue of educators reading questions to the learners, is cited in the 2011 ANA report. There is also an admission in the report that ANA results show low competency levels in literacy/language basic skills. The report found the learners' hand writing is illegible, even below the Foundation Phase level. This could be an indication of "either insufficient training in this important skill and/or inadequate practice in hand writing/letter formation" (DBE, 2011e). It reported cases of learners lacking basic literacy skills such as correct spelling of frequently-used words, proper use of language forms (e.g. correct use of prepositions, plural forms, tense, opposites, synonyms, etc.) was detected. This could be a result of insufficient vocabulary, which could have risen from a lack of adequate "reading" and exposure to new words and how they are used (DBE, 2011e). A major finding is the prevalence of poor comprehension skills where in most cases, learners tended to attempt only simple questions, requiring them to only extract information directly from the given text or give short one-word answers. Many of the learners failed to respond to questions that demanded complex skills of inferential reading and reasoning which was attributed to absence of sustained interactions with different types of texts (DBE, 2011e).

Based on the findings in the ANA 2011 report, questions can be raised on the quality of teaching in the foundation phase classrooms. As can be observed, the excerpts included in this study suggest that the literal level questions were

common and there appeared to be a dearth of inferential questions. Although questions arise about the validity of the ANA, this particular finding seems to align with the classroom pedagogy observed in the classrooms in this study. The poor pedagogy subsequently results in poor ANA performance.

5.8 Language in education

The issue of language in education, a major theme emerging from my data, is an important aspect in early childhood education. It is the basis of the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The language in education is problematic in the South African education system as many black children in township schools are said to be exposed to multiple languages spoken in their communities. Numerous studies and debates agree that multilingualism can be both a problem and a resource. Children living in multilingual societies who are not monolingual are faced with the question of which language to use (Coulmas, 2013: 123). A major challenge multilinguals encounter is individual language loss, or the decrease in competence of a language less used (Holmes, 1993). On the contrary, multilingualism has been credited for privileged linguistic abilities, cognitive competence, and personal development (Ewert, 2008; Paradowski, 2011). This complex linguistic situation can be deduced in Chief Executive, British Council, Sir Martin Davidson's foreword to *The Cape Town Language and Development Conference: Looking beyond 2015*, in which he pointed out that:

Most Africans are multilingual, with competence in one or more local languages as well as regional languages, African lingua francas and European languages. Each of these languages is predominant in its own domain: between family members, when trading across borders, when dealing with officialdom (McIlwraith, 2015).

Sir Martin Davidson's remarks highlight the extent of the problem facing African children who are confronted with different languages in their daily life and education. Recent literature shows that typically, a South African uses at least two languages depending on context (Banda, 2000). Blacks, particularly those in urban areas, have been known to use three or more languages (Cook, 2008; Slabbert & Finlayson, 2002). Recent studies have indicated that children who grow up in an environment speaking more than one language from an early age are more

perceptive and intellectually flexible than those who speak one language (King, 2007). However, research on the relationship between language and ways of knowing has established that multilingual learners are often put under pressure to use a monolingual lens to make sense of the world and of who they are (García & Wei, 2014; Makalela, 2015; Makoni, 2003). This tenet of monolingual orientation in school curricula is instilled by a one-ness ideology of one language, one nation and one classroom approach (Ricento, 2000).

A key finding in my study is that most township children are exposed to many languages in their homes and communities leading them to lack competence in any of those languages. Although multilingual people on many occasions tend to show identifiable full range of communicative competence in several languages in place, there is a rare perfect multilingualism in practice (Okal, 2014). Studies have shown that even if we acquire both or several languages in place, there is always a notable tendency that one language will always dominate over the others which are considered subordinates (Okal, 2014). As a solution to this problem, Sir Martin Davidson suggests that the role of policy makers and educators should not be to annihilate learners' languages but to promote English "as a language *in addition* to the languages spoken by individuals, not instead of them" (Davidson cited in McIlwraith, 2015). What Sir Martin Davidson suggests is that policy makers should support the promotion of English in *addition to* the local languages not *instead of* them (own emphasis). He warns against the perception of English as a language of opportunity to getting a good job, moving out of poverty, aspiring to a better life and a way to changing the fortunes of the whole family. In his opinion, English should not be a source of uprooting people from their cultures. One of the parents I interviewed, Ms Dube, holds views consistent with Sir Martin Davidson's on issues of multilingualism as she says:

Children don't understand even their home language. They don't have a proper Home Language. You find that the father of the child is Tswana and the mother is Venda and the child plays with Zulu children. The child gets confused. The school language policy is also worse. Children who are in Grade three are doing Setswana Home Language and English First Additional Language. The English language is foreign. English is worse

because it is White people's language and the Model Cs²⁰. When we went to school we were taught in Setswana until Grade four. We just did Basic English of rhyming words and the poems which were easy. Some parents don't understand English so they are unable to assist their children with homework (Interview with Ms Dube, 2013).

The scenario above, exemplifies the South African township multilingualism dilemma. Ms Dube argues that learners have a poor command of both English and what is supposed to be their mother tongue. The same observation is made by Banda (2000: 51) who points out that in a situation in which English is the preferred medium of instruction it leads to poor mastery of both English and the mother tongues. In this study, Ms Dube reveals that most township children do not have a 'proper' home language as one may find that the child's mother is Venda-speaking, the father is a Tswana-speaking and the child plays with Zulu-speaking children, and the child subsequently gets confused. This issue of multilingualism in families also surfaces in my interview with Tumelo's father, Mr Miya, who expresses concern about the use of Setswana in township schools and homes:

My child struggles with Setswana. The problem is that her friends don't speak proper Setswana. Even here in the house we use different languages. She speaks Setswana with her mother but I speak IsiXhosa with her, which is my language. I think teachers must also work hard to explain difficult words to our kids. Teachers also don't know pure Setswana. Even in meetings you hear teachers speak *Tsotsi Taal*²¹. That's creating a wrong example to our kids (Interview with Mr Miya, 2013).

According to Mr Miya, educators should be more explicit in their teaching, taking cognisance that their learners are not eloquent in Setswana. He also alleges that some educators are not fluent in Setswana themselves and resort to slang which according to him sets a wrong precedence to the children they teach. Mr Miya goes on to make an interesting observation pertaining to language varieties the children are exposed to at school:

Educators teach Setswana in a North West type of language. In South Africa we have different Setswana dialects. If we speak Tswana both of us, for example you speak North West Setswana. I speak Gauteng Setswana but because of dialects that is a problem. The problem is not the language. The

²⁰ Schools meant for white children before 1994.

²¹ A form of South African slang. Usually a mixture of Indigenous languages including Afrikaans and English

problem is the dialect. What is written here it's written in pure Tswana but because I am used to my dialect, the second grade Tswana that's what makes it a problem. As it is now this one is difficult. There's nothing difficult with Tswana. It's just that now if I'm being taught in the real language, it becomes a core one...you see here...the whole of Kagiso...they've their own way of style of speaking Tswana. You go to Mohlakeng. They've their own style of speaking Tswana. You go to Sebokeng. OK, In Sebokeng they start speaking Sotho but Carltonville...Khutsong...they speak their own different type of Tswana...even in Zeerust, Mafikeng, Rustenburg, they speak different Tswana. Go to Taung, Klerksdorp and Kimberly. Their Tswanas are not the same (Interview with Mr Miya, 2013).

The remarks made by Mr Miya exemplify the intricate complexities of the dialectical diversity of the Setswana linguistic structure located not only within the multilingual Gauteng township context but in South Africa as a whole. Mr Miya's observation implies that the standard form of Setswana taught in school is based on dialects spoken outside Gauteng, in areas such as Mafikeng, Zeerust, Rustenburg, Taung, Klerksdorp which are in the Northwest Province; and Kimberly in the Northern Cape Province. In most South African township contexts, the child's home language is likely to be "one or more local or regional dialect, sociolect or non-standard variety (different from) the spoken prestige variety or the written standard. In such contexts, a mother-tongue or home-language based schooling system has the task of using the child's principal language to mediate access to the standard variety and of adding the latter to the child's repertoire" (Plüddemann, 2010: 6). Banda (2000: 60) also points out that "the standard forms of African languages used in schools are based on the rural or regional standard forms". The basis of standard language presents a complex situation as the younger generation in townships is increasingly finding little or no appeal in the standard African languages, which they often associate with 'ruralness', which is a concept they perceive as being backward. Therefore, the opt for the increasing use of urban, code mixed vernaculars such as *Tsotsitaal*, *Iscamtho*²² and Pretoria Sotho in Gauteng schools in particular (Lafon, 2014; Cook, 2008), which they associate with urbaness. Studies on the emerging urban forms of African

²² An urban slang that is used in any of the local languages, particularly isiZulu and SeSotho, and formed from the mixing languages from Soweto's linguistic diversity.

languages done elsewhere in Africa have shown that the younger generation finds more status and prestige in the urban varieties than the rural-based standardised languages (Banda, 2000). Webb, Lafon & Pare (2010) attribute this practice to the absence of well-developed standard languages, and the rejection of standard varieties by the urban youth, in particular. In this regard, the urban forms of language are likely to appeal to both educators, parents and children in my study as Mr Miya remarks that “Educators teach Setswana in a North West type of language. In South Africa we have different Setswana dialects [...] I speak Gauteng Setswana”. What Mr Miya implies is that educators are teaching ‘rural’ languages that do not appeal to the children in this study, in particular. He finds Setswana problematic as the children in my study find themselves using one language variety at home, another one (or two) in school and yet another speech form in their social interactions with their peers (Cook, 2008). In Kagiso Township, it is common to find people using three or four different languages or dialects in the course of a single day. They use a complex array of non-standard forms of Setswana or IsiZulu that do not only reflect the current political, economic, and cultural realities in urban South Africa, but that are also used in tactical ways to shape them (Cook, 2008). Findings in this study reveal that the varieties of Setswana spoken in Kagiso Township differ from the standard dialect used in school, mostly in their lexicon. Most people in Kagiso Township mostly use ‘Street Setswana’ which incorporates lexical items from a wide range of other languages, including English, Afrikaans, Zulu, and *Tsotsitaal*²³ (Cook, 2008). Different varieties of Street Setswana, better described as a range of styles than as a single language or dialect (i.e., a well-defined and bounded code with a unique grammar, morphophonemic system, and lexicon), are all linked by the fact that they index the speaker’s urbaneness, an important part of people’s identity as modern South Africans (Cook, 2002). In addition to Street Setswana, there are also regional dialects of Setswana that vary significantly from the standard variety. As already mentioned in this section, most Blacks in South Africa, particularly those in urban

²³ Tsotsitaal is an informal South African street language composed of Afrikaans, English and other South African languages.

areas, have been known to use three or more languages (Slabbert & Finlayson, 2002). Most Setswana speakers understand and speak Sesotho and Sepedi. These three languages are considered distinct languages rather than closely related dialects only because of the pre-colonial politics of European missionization (Cook, 2008). Nevertheless, these languages have been codified as separate languages for at least one hundred and fifty years (Cook, 2008). It is therefore evident that the linguistic diversity of Setswana spoken in different parts of South Africa spills over to Gauteng Province. In this study, this 'spill-over' has a bearing on the learning and teaching practices as children are exposed to different Setswana dialects spoken in their township, including school.

The issue of dialects in education should be addressed by drawing on lessons from sociolinguistics, beginning with the early works of Labov (1972), Baratz and Shuy (1969) who argued that dialect and reading dialects are not ill-informed or half-formed variations of standard language. Instead, it is recommended that educators should recognise each dialect as constituting a well-developed linguistic system with its own rules for variations from standard language. In other words, speakers of dialects express linguistic *differences*, not linguistic *defects* as mostly assumed by educators (Pearson & Stephens, 1994: 33) [Italics in original text]. It must be noted that when establishing sociolinguistic variation as an approach to investigating language was not Labov's intention but to demonstrate how language changes spread through society (Chambers & Trudgill 1998; Chambers, 2003). The goal of the school should, therefore not be to eradicate a particular dialect in the process of making each individual a speaker of standard language but instead it should accommodate the children's use of the dialect where they are learning to read and write (Pearson & Stephens, 1994: 33). For example, in America in the 1960s, several examples of black dialect appeared and, almost as rapidly, disappeared from major urban districts. These dialects failed because African American parents wanted their children to be exposed to mainstream materials that were used by other children. (Pearson & Stephens, 1994: 33). This implies that in terms of power relations, educators and policy makers have the power to annihilate some dialects and promote those they prefer or consider

'standard' dialects. The problem with standard dialects is that they change more slowly. The fact that a dialect is used in writing and public media puts something of a brake on a change (Gee & Hayes, 2011). Non-standard dialects and standard ones are often said to serve different purposes. The former signal identification with local, often non-mainstream community and the latter identifies with a wider, pluralistic and technological society and its views of who are elite and worth emulating (Chambers, 2003; Milroy & Milroy, 2012). Gee (2012) points out that it is often an accident of history as to which dialect gets to be taken to be the standard. It is often that people with political and economic influence, whose dialect is embraced for business, social and educational purposes. Literature shows that the standardisation of the indigenous South African languages has a rural context. However, evidence from this study labels these language forms as irrelevant not only to the vast urban population but to the current sociocultural linguistic context. Since languages evolve like culture, it is recommended that various stakeholders including, cultural organisations, academics and bodies like the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) (please see Section 2.8) should revise the standard forms of the indigenous languages to conform to prevailing linguistic realities.

Contrary to Ms Dude's opinion that township children do not have mastery of any language they speak, Mr Kupe's argues that even though township children are not competent enough in their home language they are more competent in English which they are most exposed to through media such as television and radio. To substantiate Mr Kupe's argument, Prestorius and Mampuru (2007) found that bilingual Grade 7, English Second Language (L2) learners performed better in English than in their First Language (L1) or mother tongue, Setswana. They attributed the children's better performance in English to the learners' exposure to more English material than Setswana material. Other studies suggest that the poor language proficiency of South African learners might also be attributed to lack of academic language proficiency (Ntuli & Pretorius, 2005; Smyth, 2002) as asserted by Cummins (1996) that learners do not only need second language but

need a considerable proficiency in Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

On the same issue of language in education, Ms Fakude brings a different dimension to the argument as she identifies a gap in school language and the language used by the children:

And here in Grade 3 children have their own vocabulary which has nothing to do with school work. Yoh children can write (love) letters...they can write (love) letters...even those who can't write the schoolwork that they have. If you say write me 500 minus 5, they don't know but when you say 5 bob, they know it...they know 50 cent. If you say 50 cent plus R1.50 plus 50 cent, you will hear them... others are incapable in language but when it comes to maths they comes first. The problem is in language foundation (Interview with Ms Fakude, 2013).

In Ms Fakude comment, she does not only focus on the language problem in schools but points out the failure of the school system to bridge the gap between the children's everyday experiences and the language they encounter in school. She highlights that children write love letters to each other but fails to tap on this literacy practice. She does not find relevance of this informal practice to formal school as a specialized institution, with its own particular form of learning. In literacy research, there has been much interest in recent years in documenting and analysing the writing and reading activities that take place outside school, activities diverse in function, form, and purpose to school writing (Hull & Schultz, 2001). Some of these studies highlight the kinds of writing that adults do as part of everyday life (Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 2000). Others examine the literacy-related activities that many adolescents pursue on their own, including keeping diaries and writing plays (Schultz, 2002). As a community of young people, the learners have their language and literacy practices that flourish in their peer networks (Barton & Lee, 2013). Some researchers have noted the high levels of literacy and language use that anchor a variety of community based activities (Ball, 2000). Ms Fakude also thinks that the school fails to bridge the gap between the children's home experiences and the school curriculum. This observation is also echoed by Sir Martin Davidson when highlighting the importance of language in education thus:

The ingredient that is too often neglected is language, and in particular the language of instruction; the choice of which language, or languages, to use in any educational context is crucial, and may be made at different levels in different situations. What does seem difficult to argue against is the fact that you cannot learn something in a language that you do not understand (McIlwraith, 2015).

The above remarks summarise the problems facing children in the township schools. They are taught in what is supposed to be their home language, which they unfortunately do not understand. In the case of language in education, Nag et. al. (2014) make a number of suggestions around literacy teaching found to be common across different contexts. They suggest that, where possible, children's initial instruction should be in their mother tongue. Many of the developing country contexts under review have a policy of 'additive bilingualism' where children begin instruction in the early grades in their mother tongue and transition to the language of learning and instruction (LoLT) between Grades 4 and 6 (Nag et. al., 2014). Nag et al. (2014) go on to identify two critical issues in relation to this. Firstly, they argue that in many contexts, identifying a language that qualifies for mother tongue instruction is no simple matter. This is significant because of the strong effect on learning outcomes found when there is congruence between the home language and the LoLT. Secondly, a macro-level analysis of factors influencing Grade 6 reading achievement in 14 Southern African countries (SACMEQ 8 data; Hungi & Thuku, 2010) found that speaking the language of instruction at home was a significant predictor of reading success. The situation found in townships shows that although children may speak the same language used for instruction in school it may be different in form from the one used in school. The tendency that shows a clear functional differentiation of two languages is generally referred to as diglossia (Okal, 2014). In this case, the language used at home or informal environments is regarded as a low variety whereas the other used in specialised formal functions may be regarded as a high variety (Okal, 2014).

5.9 Summary

In this section I present a summary of data findings. My key findings are that the foundation phase educators at Kutlwano Primary School believe in a recitation approach and iconic picture teaching. They prompt learners to regurgitate answers in unison. All the lessons that I observed, seemed to impact less on learner creativity as the content in the lessons made learners produce ritualised responses, consistent with the transmission model of learning (Chaplain, 2003; Powell, 1999). As can be noted in all the classroom extracts analysed in this chapter, educators are mere executors of “scripted lessons” (Dresser, 2012) provided to them in the GPLMS pre-packaged curriculum. All the lessons are a duplication of a single lesson. I view this to be disempowering educators in exercising their creativity. This disempowerment of educators is a form of intellectual de-skilling in which educators are cut off from their own fields and made to rely heavily on “literacy programs in which language instruction is highly controlled” (Milosovic, 2007: 28). Similar observations are made by Nag et al. (2014: 29) assert that classroom lessons across developing countries are not interactive, or ‘dialogic’, rather “many teachers are entrenched in prescriptive/directive ways of instruction that are neither engaging nor effective”. These non-interactive classroom practices reveal that rather than playing a key role in instructional planning, the educators’ instructional authority is being eroded, as instructional decisions are meant to comply with state and federal mandates (Griffith, 2008; Milosovic, 2007). In all the the five Grade 3 classrooms I observed in this study, I found a repetitively similar teaching approach meant to “provoke ritualised responses” from learners, consistent with a “transmission model of learning” (Chaplain, 2003: 149). In terms of actual classroom practices, Nag et al. (2014) found from ethnographic studies a consistent picture across settings of dominant pedagogic practices across developing country contexts. They found that rote and surface learning dominated across classrooms. Chorus, copywriting and drill were the most visible aspects of classroom instruction. Nag et. al. (2014) point out that there was variety in these practices, suggesting a more responsive approach to teaching in some cases although they do not elaborate on what these variations were. The authors make the argument that a significant constraint on

literacy and numeracy instruction in schools is the neglect to take into account individual differences in the skills children bring to school. They also argue that classroom methods generally neglect to make explicit what is required for competency in a particular area of learning (Nag et al., 2014: 14).



CHAPTER 6
DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:
INFORMAL LITERACY PRACTICES AND IMPLICATIONS OF HOME
LITERACIES FOR CHILDREN’S CAREERS AS READERS AND WRITERS

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5, I presented the first part of the data analysis focusing on how the literacy practices of the young children are mapped at school, partly in response to Questions 1 and 2 of the study stated below. In this chapter, I discuss the implications of children’s encounters with literacy at home for their careers as readers and writers. I also present findings for the literacy practices and events documented in the Kagiso Township where the study is situated. This chapter complements data and analysis presented in Chapter 5. It covers Questions 3 and 4 and also partly covers Question 2 of the study. Sections in this chapter inquire into the children’s encounters with literacy at home and their implications for their careers as readers and writers. The chapter also discusses how the children’s literacy practices manifest in the teaching and learning. The chapter also examines how educators and parents can use knowledge of children’s literacy practices to enhance children’s literacies. As such, the chapter addresses three of the four questions of the study stated below:

1. How can the literacy practices of young children be mapped at home and at school?
2. How do these literacy practices manifest in the teaching and learning process?
3. What are the implications of children’s early encounters with literacy at home for their careers as readers and writers?
4. How can educators and parents use knowledge of children’s literacy practices to enhance children’s literate selves?

The goal of this chapter is to examine the role played by the communities of the focal learners in the development of children’s literacy practices. These communities include the Grade 3 educators and GDE officials; and the families of

the focal learners. The data presented in this chapter are an amalgamation of findings gained from an analysis of interviews with the educators of Grade 3 classes at Kutlwano Primary School and the parents of the focal learners. It is also based on the observations I made of the children's literacy practices and events at their homes and the conversations I had with them. This chapter explores the different themes emanating from the data and their implications for research and teaching.

6.2 Implications of informal literacy practices

In this section I discuss implications of children's encounters with literacy at home for their careers as readers and writers. Home is the primary space where children first encounter literacy. Goodman (1996) points out that before children go to school, they already possess a wealth of literacy experiences and they have developed an implicit knowledge of language that they have acquired from their environment. Research over three decades indicates that children learn to read and write prior to beginning school (Sulzby & Teale, 2003; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). This observation is subject to contestation as it does not apply to all children. Children in different communities are exposed to different literacy practices, some of which may be different to school-based literacies. However, many educators do not associate literacy practices that children encounter at home, with a school-based knowledge. When children's performance does not meet school expectations, they often consider homes to be deficient in knowledge (Volk & de Acosta, 2003). An analysis of the children's experience with literacy is framed by the theory of language learning as socially constructed knowledge and understanding that develops through interactions with more experienced members of the community (Rogoff, 1990). Young children develop implicit and explicit understanding of the nature, uses and possibilities of reading and writing through observing and participating in literacy practices which are culturally situated (Sulzby & Teale, 2003). Kelly (2004) says when children come to school, they bring different experiences of how to act and interact during literacy events and they may hold different values and beliefs about the nature of literacy they encounter at school. For some children, their experiences and understanding of

their home literacies may match those they encounter in school. For others there will be significant differences in what they are taught in school and what they experience at home. For example, Ms Dube, who is an educator at Kutlwano Primary School and also a parent of one of the focal learners, Mashudu, describes how her parents were mediators of learning before she started school:

Our parents would prepare us for school. Isn't it at home we were taught how to count in our language and we were taught colours in our language? They would just prepare you for the language which they knew was used at school (Interview with Ms Dube, 2013).

Ms Dube's account suggests that when she grew up, parents in her community did not only mediate learning but also socialised children to the secondary Discourses in the form of language used at school. Gregory (2001) notes that in some families the role of mediating is often taken by older siblings as Ms Dube describes how, when she grew up, older siblings prepared her and other younger children for the first grade as they taught them school Discourses:

In the past there were no Grade R schools. You would leave home school-ready. Children older than us they would read the stories and poems to us and we would cram them. I think it means when a child is able to comprehend a story and narrate it in his own way or illustrate by drawing a picture, she shows that she understands the concept. She can write a paragraph to show that she understands the story (Interview with Ms Dube, 2013).

The above excerpt highlights the role played by the older children in preparing their younger siblings for school entry. Immediate family members and extended families support younger children to develop basic literacy skills. Mui and Anderson state it is also beneficial for older children to assist their younger siblings. They explain:

The older children learn various ways to present information to the younger children, teaching them important literacy knowledge while at the same time likely enhancing and reinforcing their own literacy (Mui & Anderson, 2008: 242).

In this study, I found that children were socialising their younger siblings to secondary Discourses (Gee, 2003) within the home environment. According to Gee (2012: 154) all the Discourses children acquire beyond their primary Discourses are termed 'secondary Discourses'. The 'secondary Discourses', can be acquired

within institutions that are part of wider communities such as schools. Secondary discourses are those discourses that children are apprenticed to outside of their early home experiences. In her response, Ms Dube describes how younger children who were not yet school-going were not only socialised to school Discourses but were also equipped with comprehension and narration skills by the older children. The practice of older children teaching younger children aspects such as poetry and storytelling suggests that the older children had mastered some of the school Discourses as the older children mediated the informal learning processes. In this context, the older children are either siblings or other children in the community. The practices described by Ms Dube suggest that when socialising the younger children, the older children incorporate practices that resonate with school-based secondary Discourses (Rogoff & Toma, 1997).

6.3 Reading practices outside school

In this study, one of the emerging themes is reading as an out-of-school practice. Barratt-Pugh (2000) and Hill, Comber, Loudon, Rivalland & Reid (2002) describe a sociocultural viewpoint of reading involving an understanding that children gain different understandings about what counts as reading and how it is conducted from their observations of, and participation in, home, community and school reading activities. The manner in which reading is conducted in each context is shaped by a number of factors including cultural and social values, beliefs, historical and political influences (Rossow, 2004). In her study of children from three different communities, Heath (1983) reveals distinctly the different home language routines and attitudes towards written language. In Heath's study, children of Gateway (mainstream black and white community) received early initiation and exposure to books, written and oral narratives, book reading behaviours, and questioning routines. Children from Roadville, a white mill community, were expected to accept the power of print by learning alphabet letters and doing book-like activities. In the third community of Trackton, children lived in a highly oral black mill community where storytelling and verbal attention-getting skills were prized and few children's books and book-reading activities were found in the home. Heath concludes that children from Gateway entered

school not only familiar with book-reading routines but having well-developed comprehension strategies. Roadville and Trackton children's language and literacy development did not match classroom language and literacy routines and expectations as compared to Gateway children's. Similar experiences were observed in my study. Katlego only reads school books as shown in the following transcript:

- Ms Teffo: Yes, only school books...not just any books. And the other thing that we also read in this house it's the bible.
- Researcher: Which school books do you usually read?
- Ms Teffo: It's the school story books...they often give them short stories to read...the Setswana ones to read.
- Researcher: Why do you read to him?
- Ms Teffo: I like to read to him first and then explain to him and ask him to read by himself...to read on his own (Interview with Ms Teffo, 2013).

Parental involvement in their child's literacy practices positively affects children's academic performance (Fan & Chen, 2001) and it is a more powerful force for academic success than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). Parental involvement, particularly involving reading activities at home, has significant positive influences not only on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills (Gest, Freeman, Domitrovich & Welsh, 2004), but motivates children to read for pleasure (Baker & Scher, 2002). Several studies have found that parents with low literacy levels are less likely to help their children with reading and writing (Williams, Clemens, Oleinikova & Tarvin, 2003; Parsons & Bynner, 2007). These parents feel less confident in reading with their children (Williams et. al., 2003). They are less likely to have their children read for pleasure (Parsons & Bynner, 2007). Their children are more likely to have lower cognitive and language development levels (De Coulon, Meschi & Vignoles, 2008). Findings in this study show that parents are less likely to read and write with their children except when they assist their children with homework. Exposing children to reading at an early age is found to be beneficial to children's literacy development as a large body of evidence indicates that children produce more complex

utterances and use a greater variety of syntactic structures in spontaneous speech (Huttenlocher, Waterfall, Vasilyeva, Veve & Hedges, 2010; Vasilyeva, Waterfall, & Huttenlocher, 2008); and they perform better on tests of complex syntax comprehension (Huttenlocher, Vasilyeva, Cymerman & Levine, 2002). Children's knowledge of text structure and meaning expectations differ markedly depending on their prior experience with the text (Boscolo & Mason, 2003). Children who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and are from homes in which a language other than English is spoken have lower language competencies than children from middle class, monolingual English-speaking homes. The children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have different language skills when they reach school age (Brooks-Gunn, Rouse & McLanahan, 2007; Hernandez, Denton & Macartney, 2007). In U.S. schools, language minority children from lower income families were reported to be underperforming in class compared to their middle class, English monolingual counterparts. Differences in language skills are often seen as a cause of these achievement gaps (Morrison, Bachman, & Conner, 2005; Oller & Eilers, 2002). The children from middle-class backgrounds outperform children from lower income background on standardized language tests that include measures of grammatical development (Berliner, 2013; Jorgenson, 2012) as can be seen in PIRLS and other standardised national assessments.

Researchers have found reading with others or shared reading experiences to be beneficial for children (Merga, 2017). Reading with children stimulates them to read books themselves and further develop their cognitive skills (Canoy, van Ours & van der Ploeg, 2006) and give them larger vocabularies and more advanced comprehension skills (Mol & Bus, 2011). Even as early as the 50s, Milner (1951) found out that high achieving children had enriched environments with more books available for reading, more verbal interactions with parents, and more frequent opportunities to be read to than low achievers. Some parents "incorporate into socialization of their children practices that resonate with school-based secondary Discourses" (Gee, 2014: 185). Research has shown that children who have been exposed to reading before entering school are more likely

to succeed in learning to read (Boscolo & Mason, 2003). Tabors and Snow (2001) have shown that children from homes, where parents model the uses of literacy and engage children in activities that promote basic understandings about literacy and its uses, are better prepared for school. Such children are thought to be equipped with an ability to approach print with high expectations of its meaning and they also possess knowledge and familiarity with story structure and language of text (Ruddell, 2006). It has also been argued that irrespective of parents' socio-economic status or level of education, their attitudes and support for their children's learning can influence performance on literacy tests (Topor, Keaner, Shelton & Calkins, 2010). For example, it was observed that children from low income homes possess lower levels of language skill compared to children from more advantaged backgrounds on measures of language processing, language comprehension, and language production from infancy through high school, and the gap widens with age (Fernald, Marchman, & Hurtado, 2013; Hoff, 2006; Huttenlocher et al., 2010). This observation is disputed by Moll and Ruiz (2002), based on their analyses of language and literacy interactions in working class families and sheds new light on these homes' language richness. Moll and Ruiz (2002) argue that working class households "are not socially or intellectually barren; they contain knowledge, people use reading and writing, they mobilise social relationships, and they teach and they learn". They dispute the prevailing belief that children from working-class homes suffer deficits in 'funds of background knowledge' (Ruddell, 2006: 95) and suggest that the real deficit is lack of extended social networks between home and school and appreciation of the rich language and literacy resources offered by the home and community.

6.4 Mediation: mapping children's literacy practices at home

In this section, I discuss the role of parents and siblings as mediators of different literacy events and practices at home. I specifically explore the literacy events in which parents and siblings of the focal learners mediate learning. Within a sociocultural framework, young children learn as apprentices alongside more experienced members of the culture (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004). "Crucial to a

sociocultural approach, therefore is the role of mediator (a teacher, adult, more knowledgeable sibling or peer) in initiating children into new cultural practices or guiding them in learning of new skills” (Gregory, et. al., 2004: 7). Research has highlighted the important role played by parents and other family members, friends and mentors in mediating learning (Gregory, et. al., 2004; Kelly, 2004). It has been found that mothers have been active conduits for children’s literacy development as they often teach children to read and write at home (Van Kleeck & Schuele 2010: 343). However, sometimes children are the more proficient other, as was the case in the refugee families with whom Perry (2009) worked. In her documentation of young immigrant siblings teaching and learning literacy as they played school at home, Gregory (2005) demonstrated the synergistic nature of the process. That is, the younger child benefits from the more expert tutelage but the older child’s literacy knowledge is also enhanced as they demonstrate and explain to the younger children. In a nuclear family context, children find older siblings more easily accessible than their parents when playing a mediation role. Younger children often imitate their older siblings’ language and actions during play, which is one way to establish shared meanings about the course of the play (Barr & Hayne, 2003; Howe & Recchia, 2014). In their early work on sibling caretaking in Hawaiian families, Weisner, Gallimore and Jordan (1993) found that children used more Standard English and more complex language with other children than they did with their parents. In another research with Bangladeshi British families in East London, Gregory and Williams (2000) found that older siblings, rather than the parents, carefully scaffolded the early home reading experiences of their younger siblings. In this study, for example, Mrs Miya describes how her reserved daughter, Tumelo, becomes talkative when interacting with her friends. On my visits to the homes of the five children, I find that the family unit plays an important role in the literacy development of children. Children whose family members assist them with school work tend to do better (Gregory, et. al., 2004; Kelly, 2004). However, in this study most of the parents inform me that they do not spend much time with their children so they are. In most cases the parents spend most of their time at work or they do not stay with their children. This results in children having no one to assist them with

homework or monitor their progress in school. Research shows that parental support plays a major role in children's reading literacy development (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Larson, 2005; Kajee, 2011). What emerges from my research is that mothers and siblings mostly participate in the literacy practices of young children. The conceptualisation of sibling can vary from society to society. In western societies, the term sibling is contextualised by a specific biological relationship of children to each other, whereas in the South African context and many non-industrialised societies and Latino families (Valdes, 2003; Volk & De Acosta, 2004), sibling caretaking and teaching are typically valued aspects of family life extending to extended family members (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004). In this study, I conceptualise a sibling as any person living with the child since most black South African families are composed of extended family members. In the townships of Johannesburg there is an acute shortage of accommodation as a result of massive rural-urban migration so it is common to find many children living in the same house with cousins and other children of family friends considered as siblings. What is crucial in all the children's encounters with literacy at home is the role played by their parents and siblings as the mediators of learning (Williams, 2004). This is consistent with research highlighting the important role played by grandparents and other family members as mediators in young children's literacy development (Saracho, 2000a; 2000b; 2001). Mediation refers to interactions that parents have with their children. Parental mediation can take several different forms. Amy Nathanson (1999) has distinguished these forms as active mediation, restrictive mediation, and co-viewing. Of importance to my study is active mediation which involves conversations that parents can have with their children about education issues. As discussed in Chapter 3, Vygotsky (1978) argues that all human activities taking place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbols, and can be best understood in the context of their historical development. Vygotsky's (1978) argument is that children acquire knowledge from their environment when interacting with their parents, siblings, friends and other community members.

In this study, Ms Teffo assists Katlego with his mathematics and Life Skills homework although she finds the mathematics taught in school to be difficult and confusing to her. Another parent, Ms Zungu, who is Thandi's aunt, echoes Ms Teffo's observation that mathematics homework is difficult and confusing. She says the mathematics that her child does at school is different from the one that she did at school. What Ms Teffo and Ms Zungu experience in failing to assist their children implies that they do not have competence in the secondary Discourses (Gee, 2015a) to which their children are exposed. However, Ms Zungu says at times she helps Thandi by explaining some words that confuse her. Some members of Thandi's family also help her with homework and mathematics. In the words of Ms Zungu, they "help her to understand how we get 48 when we say 50 minus 2". However, Ms Zungu finds the Setswana taught to children in the primary school very difficult for her so she is unable to assist Thandi with Setswana homework. She reveals that although Thandi's grandmother did Setswana at a Catholic school, she also finds Thandi's Setswana homework challenging. Thandi is therefore helped with her Setswana homework by, Dineo, her uncle's girl-friend. Dineo is originally from Mafikeng, where Standard Setswana is mostly spoken. She is eloquent in Standard Setswana and also well acquainted with the local township Setswana lingua. That makes it easy for her to explain to Thandi, in local lingua, the contents of school texts written in Standard Setswana. The problem the children face in dealing with Standard Setswana is also highlighted by another parent, Ms Dube, who is also a foundation phase educator. She does not read English with her child, Mashudu, but has to read Setswana texts to her:

I don't recall reading to my child. She's the one who reads to us. If I read to her it is home language because she doesn't know Setswana well. She reads English on her own. Isn't it I'm a teacher so I bring material from school for her to read? I taught her to read at a very young age. Most of the time when I read to her it is Setswana because she doesn't know Setswana even when she reads it, you can tell that she doesn't know it. It's important to read with the child. Isn't it kids just read for enjoyment so when you read with her you help her have a good understanding because you are able to explain the difficult words to her. You can also teach her the moral of the story. You're able to see what the child has learnt by asking her questions. You can also tell the level at which the child is reading (Interview with Ms Dube, 2013).

In the above example, Ms Dube reveals that the extent of her mediation is limited to only reading Setswana texts with her daughter, Mashudu. She says Mashudu reads English texts on her own while she assists her with reading the Setswana texts which, according to her, are in Standard Setswana that is problematic to Mashudu. Standard Setswana is important to learners as it is the official written and spoken Setswana used in school. Ms Dube also highlights the importance of reading for understanding. After reading a story, Ms Dube questions her child in order to assess her content understanding and recall (Heath, 1980). Saracho and Spodek (2010: 1380) point out that when reading to young children more than merely reading the text is required as children need instant support for them to be able to understand the complex events as well as relate events to the language that is used in the story. As an educator, Ms Dube has access to reading material at her school which she gives to Mashudu to read at home. Unlike her peers, Mashudu does not only rely on the library to access reading material as she gets books from her mother. On the same issue of parents reading with their children, Mrs Miya reveals that she reads to her daughter, Tumelo. Mrs Miya also takes the initiative to teach Tumelo how to read because she believes that “teachers don’t care...our kids are not taught to read or write properly. If I as a parent don’t take the initiative to teach my child to read at home she will suffer badly”. She describes how she reads with her child, Tumelo:

I usually read to her and ask her questions to see if she understood. If she reads books from school I ask her to explain what the story is about. The problem she has is spelling. The words in the books are too difficult...like not African they refer to America. And when she explains, she struggles to express herself in both Setswana and English. I don’t know what language our kids speak. It is nice to read with my child because I can correct her pronunciation and also explain difficult words she meets (Interview with Mrs Miya, 2013).

In the above extract, Mrs Miya explains problems posed by importing texts from one context to another. To counteract this problem, she explains how she mediates and facilitates the reading process where she has to explain the difficult words to Tumelo. As the ‘knowledgeable other’ (Vygotsky, 1978), Mrs Miya assists Tumelo when she encounters difficulties in both English and her home language, Setswana. I find Mrs Miya’s mediation of learning similar to Ms Teffo’s (Katlego’s

mother). Ms Teffo also indicated that she first reads to Katlego and then explains to him what she has read. Then she gets him to read on his own, and asks him explain to her what he has read. Studies of parents reading with their children have shown positive results in reading achievement when children are read to and allowed to respond to books through talk (Kiefer, 2004). In this study, I found the parents' reading practices beneficial to children. Parents seem to play an active role in fostering the reading culture as Tumelo's father, Mr Miya, explains how Tumelo has adopted the culture of reading from him and his wife:

The thing of reading she takes it mostly from us. She reads a lot of children's novels...we both read a lot of novels so I think also kids when they look at you as parents reading, that also motivates them. Sometimes it's nice to read because reading takes a lot out of you but because of...we want to instil something to our children that reading is fun and through reading you get to grow and even your level of communication and your level of understanding becomes advanced. In fact you advance yourself by reading because if you don't read you are not going to advance. You're always going to lack somewhere so for you not to lack you ought to read (Interview with Mr Miya, 2013).

This excerpt describes how the reading practices of Tumelo's parents influence Tumelo to develop a culture of reading. Tumelo emulates her parents' reading practices. The practice of parents reading with their children is consistent with the theory that young children learn as apprentices alongside more experienced members of their communities (Rogoff, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). Their parents and siblings mediate various literacy practices. The role of mediators, such as educators, siblings, peers, parents or grandparents is crucial in initiating children into new cultural practices or guiding them in learning new skills (Kajee, 2011: 437). This practice is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978: 86) zone of proximal development, which aligns well with Rogoff's (1990: 4-5) notion of guided participation; and Lave and Wenger's (1991) legitimate peripheral participation; both discussed in Chapter 3.

Research has found that parents reading to young children has a strong influence on children's language and literacy development (Saracho & Spodek, 2010: 1379). Parents reading to their children in the pre-school years is regarded as an important predictor of literacy achievement (West, 2006). This parental activity is

associated with strong evidence of benefits for children such as language growth, reading achievement and positive effect on children's emergent literacy and reading achievement (Brooks, 2000; Bus, de Jong, & Van Ijzendoorn, 2007). In a five-year longitudinal study, Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002) demonstrated that exposing children to books at an early age developed their vocabulary and listening comprehension skills, which influenced their reading in the third grade. Oral language that is developed from parent/child reading has a positive effect on a child's later writing development (McKeown & Beck, 2005; Roberts, 2008). Reading is a socially constructed phenomenon and a form of human behaviour and a social practice, as argued by socio-cultural theorists such as Gee (2008) and Street (2003). Children who are read to at an early age tend to display greater interest in reading and an appreciation for reading at a later age (Saracho & Spodek, 2010: 1381). Early reading to children may include bedtime story-reading. However, in this study, bedtime reading does not feature as a literacy activity. This suggests that bedtime reading is not a common practice in the South African context as it is a practice said to be "context-bound and socially embedded" (Alderson, 2000: 25). Bedtime story reading has a cultural implication as it is a prevalent practice in western family context. Studies attesting to this include Heath's (1983) seminal work on families from different racial and economic groups in the United States in the 1980s which showed that young children entered school as active members of specific language and literacy practices. Other studies by Gregory (1998, 2001); Kenner (2000) and Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002) have highlighted the important role the parents played in preparing their children for school. Sylva et al. (2004), for example, point out that reading with children, teaching them songs and nursery rhymes, painting and drawing, playing with letters and numbers, visiting the library, teaching them the alphabet and numbers, taking them on visits and creating regular opportunities for them to play with their friends at home, are all associated with higher intellectual and social/behavioural scores. These activities could also be viewed as 'protective' factors in reducing the incidence of special educational needs because children whose parents engage regularly in home learning activities are less likely to be at risk for special educational needs (Sylva et. al., 2004). It can be concluded that when parents

introduce their children to books at an early age they give them a head start in school and an advantage over their peers throughout primary school (Wade & Moore, 2000). In this study, parents indicate that they find it difficult to mediate their children's homework due to a number of reasons, including the limited amount of time that the working parents spend with their children. The other limiting factor seems to be incongruence between school and home literacy practices as Katlego's mother, Ms Teffo, indicates how she finds her child's homework challenging:

- Ms Teffo: Yes, only school books...not just any books. And the other thing that we also read in this house it's the bible.
- Researcher: Which school books do you usually read with him?
- Ms Teffo: It's the school story books...they often give them short stories to read...the Setswana ones to read.
- Researcher: Why do you read to him?
- Ms Teffo: I like to read to him first and then explain to him and ask him to read by himself...to read on his own.
- Ms Teffo: I help him a lot in Maths and that one...by the way what is it called? Katlego, the one they usually give you, the one that is irritating....its Life Skills I think. You see their Maths often confuses me...it's difficult. I also end up not understanding what's happening

Transcript 6.1: Interview with Ms Teffo, 2013).

Two forms of mediation are evident in the excerpt. First, Katlego's mother, Ms Teffo describes how she engages in reading with him. This exemplifies two broad categories of literacy practice; the practice of consumption in which a parent and a child read together, and the production of literacy artefacts, for example, sentence construction in Life Skills and English creative writing. Although reading and writing cannot be juxtaposed and compared as if they lie on the opposite ends of the continuum, Goodman (1996: 10) reminds us that through research "it becomes apparent that writing and reading are not mirror images of each other", there are similarities and differences in these two practices with one impacting on the other. In Katlego's home, the material that they read is confined to school books and the bible although his mother, Ms Teffo, does not clearly explain how they read the bible. Ms Teffo describes how she models reading so that Katlego can emulate her. On the other hand Ms Dube presents a different view role on

parental mediation during her child's reading practice (Note that she speaks in Setswana which was translated to English):

My child doesn't need any assistance. My duty is to only check homework knowing that she did her school work. I only check. I taught her at a young age to do her homework. Last time in Life Orientation they were learning about planets. That's when I taught her that if she wants to know about planets she must use her phone and use the Internet. I bought her a small phone which has Internet but can't get into things such as WhatsApp. I taught her that if you want to know about planets, go to the Internet and type 'planet'. And if you want to know about Jupiter, you go back and say 'Jupiter' and it will tell you what type of planet is it...what is surrounding it and how far is it. She is not a very intelligent child but she knows that if I don't do homework my mum will beat me with a slipper (Interview with Ms Dube, 2013).

In the above example, Ms Dube reveals that although her child, Mashudu, does most of her homework independently, she mediates some of Mashudu's literacy practices as she teaches her how to acquire information from the Internet. Ms Dube reveals, her child is coerced to do her homework through fear of a beating with a slipper that she gives her if she does not do so. Research has shown that parental involvement requiring a large investment of time, such as communicating and/or reading with the child, as well as parenting style and parental expectations, has a greater impact on educational achievement than some other forms of involvement, such as parental attendance and participation at school. Indeed, reading and communication with the child emerge as important facets of parental involvement in numerous studies (Jeynes, 2005). However, Jeynes (2005) further notes that parental involvement in their children's literacy activities does not only benefit the children but it also has numerous benefits that have been reported by the parents themselves, including greater skills acquisition, greater confidence and self-esteem, a better parent-child relationship, and increased engagement with learning. For example, Tumelo's mother, Mrs Miya, underlines that participating in her child's homework is also beneficial to her as she is able to acquire knowledge relevant to her part-time studies in Teaching at the University of South Africa:

And for me my school projects, they do motivate me to read because they require me to observe my child reading. I usually read to her and ask her

questions to see if she understood. If she reads books from school I ask her to explain what the story is about. The problem she has is spelling. The words in the books are too difficult...like not African. They refer to America. And when she explains, she struggles to express herself in both Setswana and English. I don't know what language our kids speak. It is nice to read with my child because I can correct her pronunciation and also explain difficult words she comes across (Interview with Mrs Miya, 2013).

Mrs Miya's comment suggests that her participation in her child's homework helps her with her long distance education assignments. In the next section, I further discuss parental involvement in how parents mediate the focal learners' literacy practices.

Contrary to the claims made by parents that they participate in their children's homework to a certain extent, educators think that parents are not doing enough. All the five educators that were interviewed in this study express the need for the parents to play a more active role in the education of their children. First, Ms Tafane's appeal is that, "parents must be very active in the education of their children. They must make sure that they do homework and read their books every day", while Ms Fakude views parents as "the children's first teachers who must make sure that education extends to home". Moreover, Ms Hamba explains that:

Parents are supposed to extend what has been done at school. They are supposed to help their children...to supervise their children with their homework and to encourage them too because here at school we help learners with all that but there is a limitation for things that are supposed to be done *akere* (isn't it). The day is not long enough. We do sometimes give ourselves extra time to help the children but sometimes other learners need more than that.

Ms Hamba points out that although educators mediate learning, the school day is not long enough to enable educators to adequately reach out to all the learners. She appeals to parents to enhance what the children learn in school and mediate learning by helping their children with their homework. On the other hand Ms Dube describes parents as not been concerned with assisting children with homework:

You tell a parent that her child cannot read so she must try to make her practice to read at home. The parent will say what is your job? You are paid to make my child know how to read.

Ms Dube's comment suggests that parents lack commitment in assisting their children with homework. On that note, Mr Kupe suggests the need for parental involvement:

I would highly recommend parental involvement because the community which we are based at right now it seems to be an illiterate community if not an 'I don't care' community. In most cases when you give learners the homework, learners would come to school either the parent has written the homework for the learner or the homework is not done at all and if you ask the learner why is the homework is not done, the parent was not available to help the learner. If parental involvement can be encouraged and parents at home play their role. If they can be on board it can increase the literacy (Interview with Mr Kupe, 2013).

Mr Kupe's comments suggest that parents have a negative attitude towards their children's education as he says parents do not assist with homework. He also expresses concern over a lack of parental involvement in their children's schooling. The conclusions that I draw from the perceptions of educators such as Ms Dube and Mr Kupe is that they lack understanding of the sociocultural and socioeconomic context of the community they are working in. As mentioned in Chapter 4, most residents in Kagiso Township are either unemployed or work menial jobs requiring them to leave their homes very early in the morning and return late in the evening, which means they have little or no time to assist their children with homework. All the parents in the study share similar sentiments that they have very little time to actively participate in their children's school work. For example, Tumelo's parents, Mr and Mrs Miya, express that they cannot help their child with homework due to time constraints, as Mrs Miya explains, "we don't have time for homework. We come home tired and don't have time to assist our child with homework". This is further explained by Mr Miya:

We arrive at 6pm. We only have two hours before the kids go to sleep. When we leave, we leave here at 5 when they are asleep. When they wake up, we are not here. We're gone...long gone. Probably when they leave, we are already at work (Interview with Mr Miya, 2013).

Mr Miya's comments highlight the difficult life of working class parents who barely spend much time with their children. Tumelo's parents indicate that they do not

have as much time as they would wish to be able assist Tumelo with her school work. The other reason given by all parents in the study for not being able to assist their children with homework is that they find the work too difficult. All the four parents in the study, except Ms Dube, who is an educator, say they find it difficult to assist their children with homework. For example Ms Miya says, “Most of the work they do is too difficult for me as a parent, what more a small kid”. Another parent, Ms Teffo, Katlego’s mother, also complains that she finds the work given to the children very difficult; while Thandi’s aunt, Ms Zungu, says she finds the work given to their children difficult and confusing at times. Lastly, Lindi’s grandmother who just has primary education says, “I am illiterate. In fact I am not a teacher”. Mr Miya, sums up the parents’ perceptions by saying the educators’ expectations of parents is overzealous as he poses the rhetorical question, “How can I help in the teaching of the children? I’m not a teacher and don’t know any methods of teaching?” This question shows the disjuncture between home and school.

6.5 Literacy practices during play

The implication of play in learning and development is highlighted by Vygotsky (1978) who says such processes occur in the children’s social interactions in which more competent members of the culture engage with less competent members who are unable to engage in such activities alone. According to Vygotsky (1978) such encounters permit learning to take place in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The children in my study exploit the ZPD during collaborative dramatic play with their friends and siblings. Vygotsky sees symbolic or dramatic play as central to a child’s emotional and cognitive development (Williams, 2004). Play can also provide a self-help tool, permitting children to “create their own scaffold, stretching themselves in such areas as self-control, cooperation with others, memory, language use and literacy” (Roskos & Carroll, 2001: 4). During the activities of play discussed in this study, the children participate in imaginary life events. For the children in my study, media and school form the basis of the play activities. Research has also found that during sociodramatic play the children are able to develop social skills such as acceptance by peers, frequency of language

use, a number of friendly interactions and independence from educators (Paley, 2004). In my study, the children develop their own play rules on how the 'play-event' should be conducted and the role each participant has to play. Sociodramatic play appears to enhance cognitive and social skills because of the complex nature of activity when children take on roles and use make-believe transformations to act out situations and play episodes (Christie, Enz & Vukelich, 2003). The sociodramatic play I observed were complex socioemotional scripts incorporating insights into relationships and emotions such as the imaginary disciplinary proceeding in which a parent is called to the principal's office to discuss the progress of her child. The children move easily between the real and the imaginative world. Thus, during play, children interweave schemata, incorporating both elements of real life and fantasy as they attempt to make sense of the world and construct meaning outside the boundaries of reality (Roskos & Carroll, 2011).

Research of young children's play conducted from a sociocultural perspective suggests that play is a context in which children are active creators of their own development and provide their own scaffolding (Ginsburg, 2007; Bodrova & Leong, 2003; 2005). This explains how "young children learn as apprentices alongside more experienced members of the culture" (Gregory et al., 2004: 7). Gregory et al. (2004) explain how children develop literacy through interacting in dramatic play and storytelling with other family members. Ms Dube describes the literacy practices that her daughter engages in during play with her friends:

They try to imitate what they did at school in the morning. They imitate the teacher. Mashudu likes teaching her friends and my sister's child, Karabo. Like yesterday, I heard her over the phone saying 'Karabo, say-how are you'. Which means she's teaching her the language of learning. Isn't it Karabo is yet to start Grade one. So when Mashudu is at home, she reads to Karabo and says to her 'Speak like me'. A friend of hers is two Grades ahead of her. Mashudu and her friend no longer play games of 'mother and child'. They are always playing 'school'. You hear them say 'Now we're going to school. Now school is out' (Interview with Ms Dube, 2013).

In the above example, Ms Dube describes how her child, Mashudu's play is modelled on school literacy practices. Mashudu models herself on the teacher as

she teaches her young cousin, Karabo, how to greet in English, which Ms Dube terms the 'language of learning'. Ms Dube also reveals that her child and her friends play games associated with school and, "(they) no longer play games of mother and child". Ms Dube's observation suggests that when children play outside school she expects them to play games emulating home activities. The event in which Mashudu teaches her cousin how to greet in English suggests that school literacy practices are mediated by older children who are already attending school. Ms Dube also thinks that school-going children, like Mashudu, socialise younger children like Karabo, who are not yet school-going, into school practices so that they start school 'school-ready'. She also reveals that older children read poems to the younger ones. The younger children then memorise or 'cram' the poems so that they can be able to recite them. She also says when older children read a story to younger children, they later ask the younger children to demonstrate their comprehension of the story by narrating it in their own way or illustrate it by drawing pictures. The older children in this context act as socialising agents, passing on knowledge about what it means to be a member of their particular culture to less experienced members who are the younger children (Williams, 2004). It is within their communities that children interact with peers and siblings in developing and acquiring different literacies. Children's social worlds change as they move beyond their families and interact with peers in organised play groups and preschools. Young children participate in role-play routines to transform the confusions and ambiguities they find in the adult world (Corsaro, 2011). In the following play event I discuss Thandi's play activity with her friends. The activity illustrates how children create play events drawn from different Discourses.

Thandi: Tshidi you're cheating. You're always the first.
Lebo: I started first. I'm Noluntu and my husband is Phenyo.
Mandy: I'm Mawande, Noluntu's mother.
Thandi: But Phenyo is boring. He cheats Dineo with Noluntu.

Lebo: My mother doesn't want us to watch *Generations*²⁴. She says it's an adult show.

Mandy: I watch it if my mother is not around. My grandmother doesn't mind!

Thandi: Let's play school. I'm the principal.

Mandy: I'm teacher and *wena* (you) Tumi you're a parent!

Thandi: You're the naughty Themba's mother!

Thandi: Your child doesn't do homework, why?

Mandy: He play a lot, Principal, with his friend. They play play-station whole day.

Lebo: He does not do his homework. Does not write spelling!

Thandi: He must get detention!

Mandy: He does not read aloud in class.

Thandi: Teacher, you must give him a book every day to read at home. Mother must help him.

Transcript 6.2: Thandi and friends' play activity

In the first part of this extract, Thandi and her friends exemplify literacy events drawn around their encounters with a local soap opera on TV, *Generations* as they identify with characters in the soapie. By saying that one of the main characters, Pheny, is cheating on his wife, Dineo, with Noluntu, suggests that they follow the story-line. Another interesting aspect in these children's play activity is their awareness of social issues such as infidelity as they reveal that Pheny is cheating on his wife. Although the soapie has an age restriction of 13 years, these children reveal to me that they watch it without their parents' knowledge. During the same play activity they also emulate school literacy practices. It is during play that these children learn with and from their peers. They play different roles such as those of parent, educator and principal. They are aware of a disciplinary procedure when a child does not do homework. In this play activity they depict the theme of discipline and punishment and the role of a parent in disciplinary intervention. They even suggest that a parent should mediate a child's reading process at home. This literacy practice is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978: 85) argument that "what children can do with the assistance of others might be in some sense even more

²⁴ A local soapie aired on South African Broadcasting Corporation Television Channel 1. It depicts South African urban middle class life and depicts various social problems such as infidelity, crime, drugs, alcohol abuse etc.

indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone". The events depicted in these play events can also be explained by Bandura's (1977) Social Theory in which he argues that children pay attention to some of the people (models) and encode their behaviour. At a later time they may imitate the behaviour they have observed. In this extract Thandi and her friends play the roles of their educators, parents and the principal. The following images 6a, 6b and 6c depict Thandi and her friends playing school.



Image 6.1a: Thandi playing 'school' with her friends



Image 6.1b: Thandi and her friends playing 'school'



Image 6.1c: Thandi and her friends playing 'school'

Images 6.1a-c illustrate what would count as a typical literacy event depicting children interacting directly with texts (Hamilton, 2000: 16). The play activities illustrated in these images depict coordinated out-of-school literacy practices that

Thandi and her friends engage in. This play activity shows that literacy learning occurs in the context of playing 'school' (Mui & Anderson, 2008). Image 6a shows Thandi playing the role of an educator as her friends play the roles of learners in her class. The activities seem coordinated as the children seem to be learning from the knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978).

On a different day, when I visit Mashudu at her home on a Saturday afternoon, I observe another of her play activities. Mashudu and her friends chuckle excitedly when I tell them that I wish to record their play. I audio record the play event in which Tumelo and Lindi, who are also participants in my research study, are present. The following play activity illustrates how the children interact with different social problems during play.

- Lindi: *Yah* [Yes] we are going to play hospital!
- Mashudu: No, Leratong hospital is so boring. When my grandmother goes there for her sugar she spends the whole day...
- Tumelo: The nurses are rude. My dad reported them to Health Department last year.
- Mashudu: My mum takes me to the doctor at Randfontein.
- Tumelo: Eish...*akere* [isn't it] your mother has money.
- Mashudu: We just give the doctor mum's medical aid and they treat me free. Ok Lindi. I am doctor.
- Tumelo: Doctor I have BP.
- Mashudu: I cough doctor!
- Lindi: I give you injection all of you!
- Mashudu: My doctor give me a letter I will buy at chemist.
- Lindi: And you Tumelo, I book you for operation. Come for operation at theatre on Monday.
- Mashudu: I am afraid of operation. My mother have operation when she give birth for my baby brother.
- Lindi: Ah Mashu...my grandmother say you must not speak strong language

Transcript 6.3: Mashudu and friends' play activity

The extract depicts what happens during Mashudu and her friends' play. This play activity exemplifies different discourses that these children are exposed to in their environment. The children bring to this literacy event a variety of sociocultural perspectives and experiences. This play setting becomes a meeting place for these children's experiences. They draw from the discourse of medicine as illustrated in

their use of medical lexicon such as ‘book for operation’, ‘BP’ and ‘injection’. Although Mashudu might not know or could have forgotten the word ‘prescription’ she displays her knowledge that some medication can be purchased from a pharmacy if one has a doctor’s prescription note. Mashudu has experience of using medical aid as she indicates that her mother produces her medical aid card when they visit a doctor. She brags that on producing the medical aid card, the doctor gives her treatment freely, Mashudu is not aware that her mother actually pays for medical aid. On the other hand Lindi also uses hospital or medical discourse. She displays an awareness that a patient has to be booked for an operation. She even mentions that the operation is done in ‘theatre’ meaning the operating theatre. Tumelo uses the term ‘BP’, which is a common South African township lingua when referring to hypertension as (high) blood pressure (BP). Mashudu is also aware of the caesarean section operation performed to assist with the delivery of babies. The theme of this literacy event revolves around the hospital context to which the children seem to have been exposed and about which they are knowledgeable. In this play activity, I observed that Mashudu and her friends’ capabilities were extended as they shared knowledge of different discourses derived from the field of medicine and social problems such as adultery. The hospital play event is a demonstration of how children can use their lived experience in literacy development. When applying the framework provided by Halliday and Hasan (1985b), the spoken texts constructed by children during play can be said to be created within a “context of situation” as their social environment determines the register they use, or the form of discourse. Research on young children’s play conducted from a sociocultural perspective suggests that play is a context in which children are the active creators of their own development, that is, they learn a range of social skills related to sharing, taking turns, understanding others’ perspectives and so on (DeVries, 2006). Vygotsky (1978) says that “play creates a zone of proximal development in the child” providing the opportunity for imaginative work that is rule governed. This implies that there is no universal form of play; it is a culturally mediated activity that has universal as well as developmental elements (Göncü, Jain & Tuermer, 2007). It has been observed that during play children reproduce the cultural knowledge they

have acquired in formal and informal contexts of the home, school and community (Wood, 2009). As can be noted in the cited excerpts of play, the children create their own rich, syncretic worlds, drawing on the many resources in their lives (Long, Volk, Baines & Tisdale, 2013).

This far this section, literacy development during play, has shown how children interact with different Discourses drawn on their environment. Through play children are able to create knowledge through their experiences in school and outside school. Their creativity and resourcefulness derives from their interaction with their environment. Although most of the play events take place outside school, the children model their play on institutionalised knowledge associated with hospitals and schools. In the play events discussed in this section children demonstrate skills of narrating a story and critiquing events. While narrating the story they also draw on their own life experiences and they are able to get into the life of imaginary dramatic characters. Through play the children are learning the skill of role play. They are also able to appropriate context based vocabulary.

The traditional perception of play tends to confine 'play', in particular, to the playground and disassociates it from learning (Hughes 2009). In the South African context this happens despite the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (Department of Basic Education, 2011) document stating that play should form part of a child's learning categorised as 'free play inside' and 'free play outside', with examples provided to support these categories. Although the document states that educators should promote literacy during 'free play' through purposeful intervention such as asking thoughtful questions which extend thinking and enlarge vocabulary (Department of Basic Education, 2011d: 21), it does not provide substantial information on the importance of play for a child's reading development and how to integrate play in a child's daily routine. For example, a study conducted by Aronstam and Braund (2015) indicated that South African educators lack personal knowledge and comprehension of the concept of play, resulting in their lack of knowledge of how to engage unstructured play to develop the learning process.

6.6 Digital literacies

With the aim of inquiring on multimodality in literacy development, as explained in Chapter 3, I posed the following questions to the parents and educators: *Do you think technology such as computers, video games, cell phones or TV can be part of the literacy development of your child at home? In what way? Should they be used at school? How?* These questions yielded the following responses from parents and educators:

6.6.1 Parents' views on technology in education

Firstly, Tumelo's mother, Mrs Miya, indicates that she finds technology to be an important learning tool both inside and outside the classroom. Mrs Miya says,

Cell phones are very useful. I joined a book-club for her on *mixt*²⁵. At times she can google some words that she doesn't know. But cell phones have to be monitored otherwise our child may mix with bad people. TV is a very important tool for learning. Programmes like *Takalani Sesame*²⁶ are very helpful to children. They learn new words as they show everyday activities such as shopping. They also show life in the rural areas that our children don't know about as they were born in towns. It's a pity that they are aired when children are at school. I think schools must have a period when children can watch child programmes that they watch at home. I think that could make school interesting (Interview with Ms Miya, 2013).

The above comment illustrates Mrs Miya's perception towards the social media such as *mixt* and her view that it should be incorporated into learning in school. She indicates that she has downloaded an application from which her daughter Tumelo is able to access children's electronic books. This implies that Tumelo is moving away from the print texts to digital modes of communication, given that she can download electronic books using her smart-phone applications. This mode of reading using mobile phones has introduced new reading and writing practices resulting from the use of computers and the Internet (Prinsloo, 2005: 88). These new literacies of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been termed technoliteracy (Lankshear & Snyder, 2000), digital literacy (Gilster, 1997), electronic literacies (Warschauer, 1999), silicon literacies (Snyder, 2002), and

²⁵ *Mixit* (pronounced "mix it") is a now defunct free instant messaging application

²⁶ A South African version of the internationally acclaimed children's programme Sesame Street. It targets children between the ages of four and eight.

multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Although Mr Miya, Tumelo's father, recommends that parents should expose their children to as much media as possible, he warns that if they are not closely monitored by adults when using the social media it can have negative consequences as children could fall prey to paedophiles:

If the thing of social network is not properly monitored they can get out of hand so they need to be closely monitored. In a case *yabantwana abalingana nabo Tumelo* (of kids Tumelo's age)...at her age she's nine now. If you don't properly manage things like this, they might just end up chatting to wrong people who might just lead them to do things that as parents and teachers we will regret to.

On the other hand, although Ms Gagu has only five years of primary education, she indicates that she finds technology a very useful tool. She particularly finds television very useful as she indicates,

On TV we learn a lot of things such as how to run businesses and how child should behave in public. The cell phone is helpful because this girl is able to use it to send messages to other *stokvel*²⁷ members.

In Ms Gagu's opinion TV has potential to provide not only children but adults, with the knowledge of how to conduct business. She also finds it useful in shaping young people's behaviour on how they should behave in society. She also finds the cell phone very useful as Lindi uses it to send messages to other members in her *stokvel*.

6.6.2 Educators' views on technology in education

In my interviews with educators at Kutlwano Primary School, they express different views on how technology can improve the literacy levels of their learners. In the excerpt below Ms Dube indicates how she finds the computer to be a valuable tool for learning and teaching:

The computer teaches them maths and language, you see. I find it very useful as long as you're able to monitor them. You can teach her to use the Internet to do her homework and she has to check something. If there's a word she doesn't know, you can teach her what to do to find its meaning using the Internet. But doing research of important things is important.

²⁷ A savings or investment society to which members regularly contribute an agreed amount and from which they receive a lump sum payment, usually at the end of year.

Because at times we don't have sufficient text books so a child can use the Internet to do her research (Interview with Ms Dube, 2013).

In the example above, Ms Dube explains how a computer can be used as a tool to teach mathematics and language. In her view, this can be done through certain applications that can be downloaded using smart phones or the Internet. Ms Dube considers the electronic media to be a solution to the shortage of textbooks in the primary schools. I consider this to be unrealistic because if the Department of Education cannot afford to purchase sufficient textbooks, how could it possibly purchase comparatively expensive gadgets such as iPads or Tablets. According to Ms Dube, the Internet can also be a child's useful source of information that can be utilised in finding the meaning of words that the child does not know. Although television is not used at Kutlwano Primary School, Ms Dube feels it could be a useful learning and teaching tool:

When it comes to TV and if you allow them to watch the right children's programmes, they develop their language. In most cases what they actually see is talked about in the programme. There's story telling also.

Ms Dube's observation suggests that TV programmes can assist children develop competence in language. As mentioned earlier in this section, children's television programmes are unfortunately aired during school hours when the children are not home. Unfortunately, schools do not have designated TV or radio lesson periods in the school programme. Ms Dube finds TV programmes useful especially for children in the foundation phase as she thinks that they expose children to new vocabulary. Her view is supported by Mr Kupe who also finds the media to be an ideal solution to the learners' language problems. His premise is based on his observation that:

Our learners are more exposed to media and the media is mostly in English and when they learn in mother tongue particularly in the grade that I am teaching right now it is Language of Learning and Teaching. Here in Grade 3, if they don't have the basics of learning in the mother tongue firstly and they are being taught directly in English it becomes easier but now the question that you asked me earlier on about the challenges of teaching literacy, you will find out that the learner has not yet acquired the early childhood level of education and she or he comes directly to be taught here at school. It really becomes a challenge to a child but experience has taught me that they are more conversant in English compared to any other

language because here in Grade 3 we teach Setswana for example as their First Additional Language but you find that when you teach them First Additional Language they experience barriers as compared to when they are learning English (Interview with Mr Kupe, 2013).

In the above extract, Mr Kupe reveals that media exposes township children to English more than other languages in their environment. He suggests that even children in the foundation phase should be taught in English which in his opinion is a language they are most exposed to. He feels that children who do not have basic vocabulary in their mother tongue comprehend English better as they are exposed to it more than other languages including those that are supposed to be their first languages. This observation is contrary to research that posits that children learn better when they initially learn their first language (L1) (Cummins, 1996) through language transfer. Cummins (1996) and other psycholinguists believe that transfer is only possible once there is a firm foundation of academic and cognitive development in the L1. They argue that transfer is made possible when the first language is maintained as the primary medium and language from which the knowledge and skills can be transferred (Heugh 2005: 79). This implies that successful classroom learning can be achieved if learners have a strong foundation in their mother tongue.

Another educator, Ms Tafane, also presents views consistent with Mr Kupe's as she also views TV to be a valuable education tool but warns that its use has to be monitored closely as some children watch adult movies till late at night when their parents do not see them. For example, from Mashudu and her friends' play activity, it is evident that they watch TV programmes that are age restricted as they cite scenes from the local soapie, *Generations*. They reveal to me that they watch *Generations* when their parents are gone to bed. Even though there may be some negativity associated with TV, Ms Tafane finds TV to be a useful teaching-learning tool that can enrich her learners' knowledge, most of whom she says hardly read books at home or use the library. She reveals that most learners only read books at school so she thinks that the use of TV as a medium of learning and teaching can bridge that gap. She attributes the children's lack of interest in reading on their own at home to their preoccupation with social media such as

Facebook and WhatsApp. When I enquire if children in third grade could be using social media her response is, “*Meneer*,²⁸ you don’t know these kids! We find a lot of porn from their phones”. However, she reveals that not all children misuse cell phones as her own children play educational games on their phones. The important role played by media can therefore be reiterated. According to Gee (2012: 8):

[...] digital media like the Internet, social media, and many new media tools are allowing more and more people, young and old, to produce their own media, designs, games, books, ideas, knowledge, and information, even without professional credentials. This is a trend that, not surprisingly, is opposed by many ‘experts’, professionals and elite.

The conclusion that I make is that all the focal learners integrate technology in their literacy practices in different ways. They use different forms of technology such as TV and cell phones to learn. Although in all the interviews I have with educators they advocate use of technology in teaching, there is no evidence of its use in their classrooms. Apparently their school does not have the technology they wish to use.

6.6.3 Technology in the children’s lives

In this section I present a discussion on how the children engage with technology in various aspects of their lives. On my visits to the homes of the children I observe that the most common technology is the television and the cell phone. All the children in this study have access to either televisions or mobile phones. Research has found mobile telephones to be integral to many informal literacy activities of youth cultures across the globe, particularly those associated with social media and search engines (Deumert, 2010: 2). In recent years, some studies have focused on the use of technology as literacy mediation. In New Literacy Studies, the notion of 'literacy mediator' has been used in a largely sociological and sociolinguistic sense, for example, with regard to social media use (Barton & Ivaníc, 2000) as shall be seen in the descriptions and analyses that follow. Other digital and non-digital artefacts are also available in the children’s homes. For example, visible in Thandi’s

²⁸ Sir, in Afrikaans

home were a CD/DVD player and CDs, books, magazines, water bills, and copies of *Krugersdorp News* and *Roodepoort News*, the latter two being free local newspapers. I was particularly interested in the grocery store catalogues that were prevalent in all the homes I visited. I was informed that the parents collected them because they wanted to compare prices when they draw up their grocery lists. Lindi and Thandi informed me that they are particularly interested in the discount stamps which their parents use to buy certain grocery items at reduced prices. However, Thandi's aunt complained that most items offered at reduced prices were for 'white' people. She explained that the reduced prices are usually on 'useless' items such as dog and cat food which according to her is not a priority in her community and jokingly remarked, "How can I buy dog food when my kids are hungry?". As explained in Chapter 4, most people in this community are destitute and they rely on social grants as their main source of income. They spend their little income on basic commodities such as food and toiletries.

Thandi:

Prominent in Thandi's home is the television set. Thandi's aunt, Ms Zungu, describes the TV as an important educational tool that Thandi uses regularly. Thandi likes watching cartoons and educational programmes which she says teach her a lot of things. She finds the children's drama *Dora the Explorer* entertaining and educational, which she says teaches her to solve life problems. When playing, Thandi and her friends mimic some lines from any drama that they find interesting. Thandi is also an ardent follower of the local TV talk show *Three Talk*, hosted by Noleen Maholwana-Sanqgu. When I ask her what she learns from the show, she indicates that "many people such as celebrities come to talk to Noleen's show so we learn a lot from them". She says she learns how the guests in Noleen's show achieved their success and the subjects that they did at school. Thandi finds that inspiring as she reveals that at school they are not taught such information. What is interesting is that the programmes that Thandi likes are in English. She is able to understand the content without an interpreter. I find Thandi's literacy practices interesting because they seem to bridge the gap between reality and school knowledge. She is able to apply what she learns in school to what she

experiences in the real world. Her literacy practices also suggest incongruence between home and school learning as she identifies a gap in school knowledge which seemingly does not prepare children for life after school. She suggests that lack of exposure by the school to different career paths. This implies that Thandi acquires knowledge on possible career paths from the media. She is even made aware of the subjects that are prerequisite to pursuing different careers. As indicated earlier in Chapter 4, section 4.2.8, Thandi's passion to become a fashion designer stems from her exposure to the works of famous South African designers such as Nkhensani Nkosi and David Tlale whose fashion designs are profiled on local television and in magazines. On my follow-up visit to Thandi's home, she proudly shows me some sketches of her 'designs'. Thandi's 'designs', Images 7a and 7b, represent her interpretation of her world of design.



Image 7a: Thandi's drawing



Image 7b: Thandi's drawing

Thandi's designs depict how she moves from her engagement with TV images to creation of her world of design. She has seen fashion designers profiling their work in fashion shows. Thandi also likes *Takalani Sesame*, an award winning South African children's TV programme. According to Thandi, *Takalani Sesame* "teaches

us through story telling. This story-telling teaches us about child abuse, crime and rural life that we town kids don't know. *Takalani Sesame* is story reading time...they call people to come and play with them". Thandi's comment highlights her knowledge of the social problems such as child abuse, which are prevalent in Thandi's community, which *Takalani Sesame* mirrors. From this programme, urban children like Thandi learn about rural life. Above all, the programme is in story-telling form, which helps child viewers to identify themes and messages in the story; and also learn how to narrate their own stories. Thandi's aunt, Ms Zungu, also tells me that Thandi likes playing with her uncle's computer. She usually likes hanging around the 'outside room' where her uncle stays, so that she can fiddle with the computer as she tries to teach herself to type. Although Thandi does not have mobile phone of her own she has access to her uncle's phone. I observe Thandi playing games on the mobile phone with her cousin Mpho. Thandi informs me that her favourite game is 'Teenage girls'. She complains that Mpho likes cheating as she chooses games that are complicated. When I ask how the games are complicated, Thandi says the instructions are in difficult English which Mpho understands better since she is in Grade 6.

Tumelo:

Tumelo is said to use the 'Google' search engine to obtain the meaning of words that she does not understand. She can be said to be using a multimodal approach to learning that her mother mediates as the knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978). Tumelo's use of technology also extends to television. Just like Thandi, in the previous example, Tumelo also watches *Takalani Sesame* which her mother finds helpful in exposing children to different experiences such as life in a rural context. Thandi's mother indicates that she finds children's television programmes very helpful in enriching children's vocabulary as they present language used in everyday situations experienced by children. On one occasion, I observe Tumelo and her little brother watching the animated children's series, *Sophia the first*. Her little brother is constantly complaining that it is a boring girls' programme. When I ask Tumelo what she enjoys about the story, she says it

teaches her that if one is clever like 'Sophia' she can always defeat evil people in her life, the way Sophia overcomes obstacles created by the witch in the story.

Katlego:

On the same issue of technology in children's life, Katlego's mother reveals that Katlego uses the 'Google' search engine to find information when he has homework. Katlego says the most interesting information he has 'googled' is about John Cena, the famous World Wrestling Federation (WWF) wrestler. However, his mother expresses reservations on the use of too much technology, which she says "delays" Katlego in doing his homework because it takes a lot of his time. She thinks that the time Katlego spends playing computer games could be used for doing homework. In her opinion, Katlego should play computer games only on weekends. Even when Katlego uses technology on weekends, she is still unhappy with it. She says she can allow him to do so, depending on what he will be doing with the technology, because she finds that most of the time Katlego accesses car games which she thinks do not help him improve his literacy competence. Katlego plays games such as 'Racing Car'; 'Police Robot Speed'; 'Bike Racing' and 'Crazy Taxi'. On one of my visits at Katlego's home, I find him playing computer games with his friends. When I ask him to show me how they play the games, he just laughs at me and remarks that I will never follow the instructions, just like all adults. From this encounter, I discover that although Katlego is not very competent in reading formal English and Setswana school texts, he can effectively read the instructions written in English on the computer games. Katlego is able to perform certain permutations on computer games. In their study, Roswell and Burke (2009) observed a learner who achieved poor reading scores in school, whereas at home he enjoyed a range of video games such as Yu-Gi-Oh²⁹. Although the learner could not acquire school vocabulary, he acquired advanced vocabulary and in-depth appreciation of the computer games. This example suggests that although Katlego might be reading poorly in school, he engages in more meaningful and effective reading when playing video games. Research studies

²⁹ Yu-Gi is a video card game played by people facing each other.

claim that children learn a lot from playing computer games. Downes (2002: 26) found that children used a “trial and error” approach to solving mathematical puzzles in computer games. The children perfected their play through playing for fun and competing with each other. In this study, I also observe how, Tumelo competes with her aunt and her seven year old brother on the “Climb the wall” game on a tablet. Research reveals that through competition the children gain pleasure and motivation to perfect their skill in the game (Gee, 2006: 9).

Mashudu:

Of the children in this study, Mashudu and Katlego are the only ones with tablet phones. The other children use small smart phones. Mashudu likes playing games on her tablet with her cousin. They alternate playing the same game in a competition mode. As already explained by her mother, Mashudu uses her tablet to obtain information using different search engines such as Google. Her mother complains that Mashudu constantly runs out of data as she always downloads ‘useless’ games. Ms Dube reveals that she has taught Mashudu how to search for information from different websites. For example, when Mashudu had Life Sciences homework on planets, her mother taught her how to search for suitable information from relevant websites.

Lindi:

Although Lindi has no cell phone of her own she uses the cell phone of her friend, Frieda, who is one of the tenants in the homestead where Lindi stays. Lindi’s grandmother has a small phone which she uses to call other church members. Every time she wants to make a phone call she calls Lindi to access the number from the phone book. Her usual comment is, “*Phela thina singamaqaba. Ziyasidida lezi zinto zesimanje*” [We are uneducated. These modern things confuse us]. Lindi informs me that she prefers sending SMS (text messages) to her grandmother’s *stokvel* members. Lindi reveals to me that she enjoys writing text messages for her grandmother as it is a quicker form of communication. She however, finds gran’s messages too long so she has to write only the important key points. The conclusion drawn from this practice is that Lindi plays a mediation

role as she constantly reads instructions to her grandmother. She mediates the communication process between her grandmother and her acquaintances.

6.7 Summary

The child's home environment remains an important determinant of the child's development trajectory. Even at the young age of 18 months, children from disadvantaged families are several months behind more privileged children. When they reach two years, there is a six-month disparity in the language-processing skills and vocabulary of children from poorer compared to better off backgrounds (White, 2013). It is no wonder that researchers are finding a close correlation between the number of words a child's care givers had spoken to the child by the time the child turned three and the child's academic success at the age of nine. They found that children's vocabulary skills are linked to their economic backgrounds. There is evidence of a wide 'word gap' between children from the wealthiest and poorest families (Hart & Risley, 2003; Sperry, Sperry & Miller, 2018). This observation suggests that sending children to pre-school programmes at the age of four or five, which are known to develop a child's numeracy, social skills and readiness for school, may come too late to compensate for earlier educational shortcomings at home. Therefore the country needs to emphasise programmes that empower parents and care givers to provide appropriate care to the young children to improve their literacy and numeracy competence.

The other main finding from my work is that in the children's homes most parents mediate learning as they help their children with homework. However, the parents indicate that they find the mathematics homework given to their children to be difficult for them as they say it is different from what they did at school. Most of the children like Thandi, Katlego and Tumelo find Standard Setswana difficult. All the children have to be helped with their language homework by adults. For example, Thandi, who is from a Zulu speaking home is helped in her Setswana homework by her uncle's girlfriend who is originally from Mafikeng, a small town in the North West Province of South Africa where Standard Setswana is spoken. On the other hand, even Tumelo, who is Tswana-speaking is also

observed to be having problems with standard Setswana. She is helped with her Setswana homework by her aunt who is from Zeerust, a small town in the Northwest Province. Both the parents and the children participating in the study know the township Setswana lingua franca. The children take to school the township lingua franca that is incongruent with the standard Setswana taught at school. However, educators seem unaware of the problems facing the parents when they try to assist their children with homework. Educators argue that the learners' poor literacy levels are a result of the parents' reluctance to assist their children with homework and not participating in school activities. They accuse parents of making school a 'drop-off zone' where they just 'dump' their children and do not care what happens to them. The educators' observation is contrary to evidence from my study as I found that parents try their best to assist their children with homework and even read with their children.

What also emerged from my study is that some parents teach their children how to use the Internet to access information. At home, the children are exposed to electronic media such as television. Educators believe that access to television can be beneficial as children are exposed to English which is a language of learning and teaching. Through television, the children are said to be exposed to more English than Setswana. They are, therefore, potentially more fluent in English than their home languages. English is the dominant language in school. Teaching in mother tongue only happens up to the third grade. Learners are from fourth grade throughout the rest of their learning career. They also benefit from watching children's programmes which have educational value. However, there is a gap in teaching as children do not use the same media in school. Both parents and educators advise that the use of media has to be closely monitored to protect children from falling prey to paedophiles on social platforms such as Facebook. There is evidence of a lack of parental monitoring as some children watch television programmes with an age restriction.

In the following chapter, Chapter 7, I present the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I provide an overview of the research followed by a reflection on the findings of the study. These findings are contextualised within the key questions informing the study. While reflecting on the findings the study raises concerns for further research in early childhood education. This is followed by comments on limitations of the study. Finally, the chapter offers recommendations for future studies seeking to develop interventions for early childhood literacy in South Africa, based on the primary and secondary purposes of this study.

7.2 Overview of the study

This case study research was conducted at Kutlwano Primary in Kagiso Township, Gauteng Province of South Africa. The site was purposely selected since it is one of the primary schools classified as poorly performing by the Department of Basic Education. My primary aim was to investigate the Grade 3 township learners' encounters with literacy in school and out of school; and the implications of these encounters for their later development as readers and writers. Together with the five learners and their families, the five Grade 3 (Foundation Phase) educators of Kutlwano Primary School who participated in the study were also identified as typical bounded cases as they were teaching at this underperforming school. All the educator participants had been teaching for more than 10 years (please refer to Table 3.1 in Chapter 3), so they had been involved in implementing several curriculum changes, such as OBE, RNCS, NCS, CAPS, as well as intervention strategies such as FFL and GPLMS: meant to improve literacy levels in their classrooms. I therefore believed that the participants would be able to yield rich information (Patton, 2002) about these interventions for literacy development.

Data for this study were collected using interviews, observations and various artefacts that were found in the school and the township in which the learners live. These sets of data were analysed through content analysis. As the data directed the emerging codes and themes, it implies that the codes and themes were not imposed on these data sets (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The codes and themes were constantly compared within and across each data set whilst focusing on the research questions (Merriam, 2009). Throughout the analysis process, the main question and secondary questions were considered as they guided the content analysis process. During the presentation and discussion of the findings of this study in Chapters 5 and 6, attempts were made to answer these primary and secondary questions.

7.3 Reflection on the findings of the study

At the outset of this study, the concern was to address the early childhood literacy practices in a multilingual township in South Africa. In this study, it is argued that there is a disjuncture between the skills-based knowledge (school based) and the different knowledges that children bring to the learning process at school. Concern over poor performance in literacy and numeracy in the foundation phase (Grades R-3) resulted in several curriculum changes, literacy initiatives, provincial and national literacy, numeracy improvement programmes such as the Gauteng Province literacy and numeracy improvement strategy (GPLMS), and a massive rollout of reading materials in the schools. These were mainly intended to address poor literacy and numeracy level in the schools. What emerged from the data is that the South African education system is in 'crisis' (Fleisch, 2008) and, according to Ingrid Willenberg (2018), calling it a crisis is an 'understatement' while Nick Spaul (2017) calls it 'devastating', as PIRLS 2016 results show that 78% of South African learners in Grade 4 cannot read for meaning. Of concern is that despite all the available evidence from research and systematic evaluations South Africa still produces learners with very low literacy and numeracy levels (Fleisch, 2008; Howie, Van Staden, Tshele, Dowse & Zimmerman, 2012; Spaul, 2013). Reports on educational achievement in South Africa demonstrate that far too many children in primary schools are performing

poorly, often failing to acquire functional numeracy and literacy skills. On a large scale international assessment of literacy, children in South Africa score among the lowest in the Southern African region and in Africa as a whole (Lancaster & Kirklady, 2010). South Africa's own assessments and international systematic evaluations, in which South Africa participates, have shown that the South African learners consistently achieved the lowest scores, well below the international average (Howie, Venter, van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Scherman & Archer, 2007). These statistics were a point of departure in framing my argument on challenges facing the entire education system and poorly performing schools, (PPS) (please see Chapter 4). However, this study did not aim to investigate the children's performance in any systematic evaluations but focused on the sample of the five learners' in-school and out-of-school encounters with literacy. Although the five learners attended the same school, the aim of the study was to create an understanding that they came from diverse linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds where they encountered literacy experiences differently. In this regard, both the in-school and out-of-school literacy practices that could shed light on literacy development in the foundation phase were examined, as the underlying assertion in this study. Drawing on the ideological model of literacy and on the New Literacy approach to learning (please see Chapter 3), it is argued that literacy is a social practice. Therefore, the main interest of the study was on the way in which the children constructed literacy practices in their individual family units from which they were able to draw (Street, 2003b) and in school. The findings of this study show that children experience literacy in various ways at home, as a primary space and through secondary Discourses at school.

7.3.1 The school environment

Guiding the discussion of findings in Chapter 5 are the research questions framed in Chapter 1:

- *How can the literacy practices of young children be mapped at home and school?*
- *How do these literacy practices manifest in the teaching and learning process?*

Formal education in South Africa begins in pre-school or Grade R, falling under early childhood education (ECE) (please see Chapter 1). As discussed in Chapter 2, the study identified a number of barriers and gaps in the early childhood education policy and implementation process. These include resource constraints, particularly for community and NGO-based centres; the problem of unqualified educators, especially in community or township and rural schools; a shortage of professionally trained personnel to enforce policy implementation and overcrowding in some centres.

Within the schooling environment, (Chapter 5) findings show a pattern in classroom practices in foundation phase instruction prescribed in the scripted GPLMS lesson plans. From this teaching approach, the study established challenges in pedagogy aimed at literacy development. It was observed that teaching mainly meant to focus on phonemic awareness was not effectively achieved. Although research has consistently shown that phonological awareness is a strong predictor of early reading success (Ehri & Nunes, 2002; Muter & Diethelm, 2001), this study found that this method does not seem to fully address the literacy problems pointed out in Chapter 1. This was partly a result of the scripted lesson plans' failure to meet the requirement of the learners. Data from classroom observations and interviews with educators show that learners in the foundation phase have problems with reading for understanding. This challenge is highlighted in both the DBE (2012) report on the learners' performance in systematic evaluations and the 2016 PIRLS report (Spaull, 2017). Successive policy and curriculum changes over the years, as highlighted in Chapter 2, suggest attempts by the Department of Basic Education to address these challenges.

One key finding drawn from Chapter 5 is the problem of competence of educators in the foundation phase. In this study, it was established that early childhood literacy problems are not necessarily linked to inadequacies such as the perceived 'illiteracy' of parents in school discourses, but to the nature of classroom instruction and curriculum requirements. There is evidence suggesting that some educators in South Africa lack the methodological skills to promote effective

learning of academic language (Meier, 2005; Chisholm, 2004; Uys, Van der Walt, Van den Berg & Botha, 2007; O'Connor & Geiger, 2009), perhaps because they have not had the necessary training in educational linguistics (Reagan, 2009). Wong-Fillmore & Snow (2000) define educational linguistics as the study of how language functions in various aspects of education. A good grounding in educational linguistics can support educators' work, particularly in teaching literacy and working with English Second Language learners. Since the literacy levels of South African school children is of serious concern (Tyobeka, 2006; Taylor & Yu, 2008; Webb, Lafon & Pare, 2010), research on the acquisition of semantic language skills in this context is critical.

Although learners are exposed to literacy teaching in the classroom, this exposure is limited. The focus of the teaching seems to be the achievement of high grades in the Annual National Assessments (ANA) to avert the poorly performing school (PPS) labelling. Literacy teaching focuses mostly on skills acquisition instead of literacy development. Data from the study show that educators are unilaterally despondent about the curriculum and the prescriptive nature of the Gauteng Province Literacy and Mathematics improvement Strategy (GPLMS) (please see Chapter 3). The GPLMS approach is seen as not developmental in classroom practice as it just promotes rote learning, and discourages critical thinking (De Clercq, 2014). The major critique of the GPLMS is its rigidity, which discourages educator autonomy and creativity to implement alternative pedagogy suitable for learners of different abilities (De Clercq, 2014). Based on the assertion that educators lack appropriate education and pedagogical knowledge, questions can be raised on their ability to teach competently should they be granted autonomy to implement pedagogy. One of the reasons the Gauteng Department of Education decided to implement GPLMS was the realisation that educators lack pedagogy skills. The educators' pedagogical skills are questioned as studies have found that many foundation phase educators in South Africa do not have the content-knowledge base and pedagogical skills to teach children to read (Charter, 2016; Cilliers & Bloch, 2018). The GPLMS initiative can be construed as avoiding the source of the problem, which is the educators' poor content-knowledge base

and pedagogical skills. As suggested in Chapter 7, this shortcoming could be addressed by improving teacher training and reskilling or retraining practising educators in appropriate pedagogy.

In the centre of classroom instruction also lies the problem of language of instruction or language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The language of instruction was found to hinder literacy development. One of the major findings in this study point to the language of learning and teaching as being problematic, especially in schools where the children's home language is not English or Afrikaans. As noted in Chapter 2, the problem facing inner city or township children is that they are exposed to too many different languages in their multilingual townships. Because of multilingualism in townships (please see Chapter 4) many of these children become "inadequate bilinguals" (Dunn, 1987) who are incompetent in what could be considered their mother tongue as well as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT).

At Kutlwano Primary School, learners in the foundation phase (Grade R-3) do all their subjects, including content subjects, in African languages, that is Setswana or IsiZulu or IsiXhosa. In the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4-6) and the Senior Phase (Grade 7-9) there is a language switch as learners do all their content subjects in English and only do an African language as an Additional Language. When interviewed, educators reported that what they found problematic is the transition from an African language such as Setswana or IsiZulu to English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) when learners proceed from Grade 3 to Grade 4. The educators further expressed concern that home language teaching in the foundation phase disadvantages learners as they learn in a language in which they are least exposed. Contrary to the Department of Basic Education's directive that children in the foundation phase must be taught in their home languages, educators in this study were found to be teaching in English. They indicated that they believe learners perform better when taught in English, arguing that young children in the townships are most exposed to English through the different forms of media such as television, radio and social media. Therefore,

they consider the learners more conversant with English compared to other languages. Conclusions drawn from these findings show that educators prefer teaching in English whilst overlooking the multilingual composition of learners in their classrooms. The preference for English language is not a phenomenon confined to South Africa and other former British colonies but a universal problem (Spolsky, 2008). Research has found that reflections on literacy development decisions concerning languages of instruction have been the major cause of the downgrading and extinction of minority languages in Africa and other former colonies (Spolsky, 2008). Similarly, pressure is now mounting in Asia and elsewhere to introduce English in primary school, alongside either the local languages or replacing them as medium of instruction especially for science subjects. For example, in South America the destruction of indigenous languages was virtually guaranteed by the Spanish refusal to recognise those languages in the educational system. In the Soviet Union, the better facilities provided to Russian-medium schools raised the status and importance of Russian and threatened the territorial languages. In New Zealand, the change from Maori to English in the 1870s in the Native Schools was the beginning of the suppression of Maori. The movement for Maori language regeneration of the last two decades has been focused on promoting Maori language development in schools (Spolsky, 2008).

Contrary to the educators' beliefs about language acquisition and proficiency, Lightbown (2008), warns that becoming completely fluent in a second language is not as easy or as straightforward as many have claimed, rather it takes several years. The UNESCO (2015) report on language and learning also points out that it is a mistake to assume that providing day care or preschool programmes in English is sufficient to prepare children for academic success in that language. Although children who have this exposure may be better prepared for school, they will need ongoing support to acquire sufficient proficiency in the L2 to succeed in academic subjects, and they will need to continue to develop the L1. Nicholas and Lightbown (2008) point out that the pace of learning an additional language, and the effective instruction or support for children to learn an additional language, will depend

upon whether the child has developed literacy in L1. One of the educators, Ms Hamba, alluded to the dilemma facing learners in the foundation phase with regard to sociocultural factors such as intercultural marriages prevalent in the townships. In her opinion, learners in the foundation phase have problems with both English and the African languages. She points out that these children speak languages that are not their first languages. Therefore, in school, these children learn a mother tongue that is different from the language they are exposed to in their social world, such as their home environment. McCarty (2008) views such children as devoid of their 'heritage mother tongue', which is their assumed home language. These children have a 'heritage mother tongue' that may or may not be spoken by anyone in their family or community, but which their parents wish them to learn in preschool or primary school programmes (McIvor, 2006). However, one educator in the study described English as "white people's language" meant for the children who attend the former model C schools (explained in Chapter 5) that were for white children only, during the apartheid era. On the contrary, another educator, Ms Fakude, expressed her preference for English as a medium of instruction although research has found it to be problematic for learners. For example, Kajee (2013) describes classroom experiences of non-English speaking learners learning in English described as like a person walking down a street in a foreign country and people were gesturing wildly to him/her yet the person does not have a clue what they mean. As mentioned in Chapter 6, children such as Thandi are entangled in a 'web of languages'. Thandi's aunt and grandmother are Zulu speaking and at school, Thandi is in a Setswana medium class. Her cousin Mpho, with whom Thandi interacts mostly, in a Xhosa medium class in the same school. When they communicate, Mpho and Thandi code-mix and code-switch Zulu, Xhosa, Setswana and English. The multilingual problem of Thandi and other people in her township is consistent with that of residents in Tlhabane, a black township near the town of Rustenburg where Susan Cook (2002) carried out a sociolinguistic study. In her study, Cook (2002) found out that many people in the township speak not fewer than three languages, and most have a passive understanding of two or three more. Cook (2008) points out that this degree of multilingualism is common among black South Africans or among Africans on

many parts of the continent. She argues that the legacy of colonialism, the phenomena of language contact, the institution of labour migration, urbanization, and, in South Africa, the politics of racial segregation have all contributed to people's extensive linguistic repertoires. In practice, the vast majority of black South Africans are both multilingual and multidialectal (Cook, 2008). Therefore, it has to be noted that the multilingual township environment that the children grow up in has an impact on their literacy development. The children speak a strange township dialect, which, while perfectly functional in their context, is not recognised in academic space.

Educators in this study typify most educators in township schools who lack English proficiency. Most educators in township schools are essentially products of an inferior Bantu education system. Their English interview transcripts are riddled with language errors ranging from tense to sentence fragments. The interviews in question were conducted in English on the interviewees' insistence. It seems impractical to expect educators who lack English language proficiency themselves to produce learners who are highly literate in English. It seems not to make sense for educators, who themselves are not confident and proficient in English, to teach learners, with whom they share a first language, in a second language. Research has found that children whose educators provide more language-advancing input progress more in their language over the course of the school year than children with educators whose language use is less supportive (Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Huttenlocher, Vasilyeva, Cymerman & Levine, 2002). Another compounding factor is that most township learners are not fully competent in their home languages either, as this study has discovered. For example, teaching learners in standard Setswana, as a language of instruction in the foundation phase, was found to be problematic to learners as they lack competence in it. Therefore, the lower academic performance of ESL learners can be attributed to lack of prior knowledge and/or lack of vocabulary (Pretorius, 2002: 191), particular to the content being presented because at this stage these learners have hardly mastered reading comprehension skills in the mother tongue let alone the L2. Conclusions can be drawn that in certain instances home language teaching produces disastrous

results in schools with multilingual learners. In the South African context it is believed that home language teaching policy may be effective in schools in rural areas, which have relatively homogenous language settings (Setati & Adler, 2000). For example, this may apply to relatively monolingual provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal and North West Province where the majority of the population is predominantly Zulu and Tswana speaking respectively. The other shortcoming of home language teaching is in the teaching of content subjects such as Geography, which, in most cases, do not have equivalent African words for English technical terms. Based on these conclusions about the educators' lack of language proficiency, one could ask whether the crisis in South African education is a result of learning or teaching.

7.3.2 *Home as a literacy space*

In constructing home as primary literacy space, Chapter 6 of this study provided each of the 5 children's vignette of home as background to the home practices that serve to address the research sub-questions:

- How can the literacy practices of young children be mapped at home and at school?
- What are the implications of children's early encounters with literacy at home for their careers as readers and writers?

The vignettes presented in Chapter 6 were taken from field notes recorded during observations in the homes of each of the five children. The observations in the homes, and later in the classrooms at school, were in line with the sociocultural approach contention that literacy learning does not only begin in school but also occurs at home even before children attend formal schooling (Goouch & Lambirth, 2007). This point is further supported by key researchers such as Heath (1983), Delpit (1986), and various works by Street (1993; 1998; 2003a) and Gee (1996; 2000b) who argue that literacy is a social practice that is embedded in broader social, cultural and political contexts. This made me aware of the important role that the parents and siblings as the knowledgeable other mediate the children's literacy learning (Vygotsky, 1978). When parents and siblings help the children

with reading and writing, they facilitate the children's literacy development (Gough & Bock, 2001). Drawing on the work of Wells (1986) who suggested that early literacy events play a major role in determining the children's later educational success, two important factors emerged from the investigation of the children's early informal experiences of literacy. First, parents prepare children for school, for example, teaching them to count in their language. Second, children experience literacy through play with older children socialising them to school Discourses. Conclusions made are that when children are provided with support to develop their literacy skills through play and other activities in the home they develop positive views of expression (Saracho & Spodek, 2010). The point made here is that children learn literacy at home and in their communities prior to schooling. While studies have shown this to be true, it is also important to point out that there is considerable variation in the amount of literacy that children experience at home and that children come to school with a wide range of literacy knowledge. Purcell-Gates (1996) shows the relationship between these two variables as she established the extent which children's home literacy experiences contributed to early learning in school. Although many South African children are exposed to vast literacy experience at home, they reach school with limited academic language proficiency. This is due to factors such as lack of reading in the home, and the limited vocabulary they are exposed to due to the lack of available adult attention. Interviews with parents show that they often work very long hours and are unable to dedicate much time to assisting their children with school work. Despite these challenges, findings in the study show that with the limited time they get, parents or guardians play an important role in developing these skills. Research shows that a child who encounters literacy in a literate environment before even entering formal schooling becomes a competent reader. However, findings in this study show that educators have limited knowledge of the valuable experience that the children bring to school. For example, watching TV and its perceived benefits to children's language development, is a common practice in the homes observed in the study, but it does not feature in any school practices. Furthermore, research shows that another invaluable home activity is play. Although play features prominently as a common practice in children's lives, there

is no evidence of educators incorporating it in their teaching. The educators' failure to incorporate children's home experiences dents literacy learning associated with children's social practices present in their everyday activities. The early works of Barton and Hamilton (2000), highlight the children's experiences outside formal classrooms as equally important for literacy learning. Research documenting literacy practices in homes, particularly homes in diverse communities (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Gadsden, 2000) challenge deficit assumptions about families and suggest that educators should build on home literacy practices to enhance school learning. As pointed out earlier in this section, some scholars have looked beyond the parent/child dyad to recognize the roles played by siblings, grandparents, and other family members (Goin, Nordquist, & Twardosz, 2004; Gregory, Long, & Volk, 2004; Perry, Kay & Brown, 2008).

Consistent with findings in this study, parents in townships are seen to foster the culture of reading through joint book reading undertaken with their children. This is considered a literacy experience that could promote the children's literacy development (Sénéchal & Young, 2008). In all five homes, it was observed that the parents and relatives help the children with reading Setswana and IsiZulu texts irrespective of the parents' socioeconomic status. Although reading of school texts is a common practice in the five homes, reading for pleasure is a rare practice. Although some studies associate reading and writing with literacy rich, mostly middle class environments, findings in this study demonstrate that even low-income parents can also actively participate in the education of their children. In support of this finding, Barton and Hamilton (1998) identified a wide range of literacy activities engaged in by parents who may have had difficulties with reading and writing themselves. In her ethnographic study, Heath (1983) also found different ways in which literacy was perceived by families who did not understand print in ways that were shared by the school. This finding is supported by Kelly's (2004: 68) view that it is untrue to assume that low-income families provide "inappropriate environments for fostering, modelling or valuing literacy development". In this study, it was established that siblings and other members of the extended family are influential mediators of literacy. Other researchers, for

example, Rogoff (1990), Gregory (1998), and Gregory and Williams (2000) who report that parents may not be the most influential mediators of literacy for children, support this point and they highlight the role played by other children and adults in informal literacy practice settings. For example, in this study, Thandi is assisted by her cousin Mpho and her uncle's girl-friend, who help her with her Setswana homework. On the other hand, Tumelo's literacy practice is mediated by both her aunt and parents. These examples highlight the commitment to literacy development in different families.

A key finding was made in response to the research question: *What are the implications of children's early encounters with literacy at home for their careers as readers and writers?* It was found that the children's out-of-school practices have the potential to support literacy development in school. It can be concluded that children interact with multiple Discourses during their everyday practices and play. For example, children interact with media and medicine (hospital) Discourse and they have considerable vocabulary in these Discourses. Although there is general lack of knowledge of these Discourses by educators, they can potentially be valuable in enhancing schooled literacies. The other main argument drawn from Chapter 6, relating, as it does, to the language of instruction in school, is the issue of dialects. An emerging theme concerning the language problem centres on different dialects spoken in the townships because of multilingualism. This multilingualism is a result of regional and provincial migration experienced in South Africa. In addition to multilingualism in the townships, there is widespread multidialectalism, or the command of more than one dialect of a language. In fact, very few people in townships such as Kagiso ever use a standard language at all, such as Setswana or IsiZulu. They mostly use *lok'shin* lingua (please see Chapter 6).

It has to be noted that the most important home practice established in Chapter 6 involves play as an out of school practice. There is general lack of knowledge of the relevance of children's' out-of-school to in-school literacy practices. For example, in this study there is no evidence of educators incorporating play in their

teaching despite the observation that play is the most common out-of-school practice in which the children engage. Arguments persist about the value of the contribution of the home and out-of-school settings with regard to literacy. According to Pahl and Rowsell (2015: 101), literacy exists in homes with the varied ways that people live, speak and practice every day. For Haneda (2006: 337) too, in order to help school-age children develop the literacy competences required for success at school, it is important to recognize and draw on the repertoires of literacy practices that children develop outside school.

Out-of-school literacy practices are not always restricted to the physical spaces outside school but can occur within the physical school boundaries outside the formal classroom context. In her study on in-school and out-of-school literacy practices, Maybin (2007) illustrates the heterogeneous configuration of a classroom space where formal (linked with school setting) and informal (linked with home or vernacular setting) literacy practices swap roles, interact with each other and even run parallel to each other. Lenters (2007) too shows how literacy practices extend from the family at home to peers at school such as discussing novels read at home with peers at school. A growing body of research aimed at bridging the gap between out-of-school literacies and classroom practice (Street, 2011) and recent research from New Zealand suggests that some children may be disadvantaged when they go to school, when their early literacy “experiences are not closely matched to the pedagogy and practice of school” (McLachlan, 2006: 33). When home literacy practices greatly differ from primary school literacy practices, children can experience difficulties in learning. Often emergent or early literacy develops in social contexts rather than through formal instruction. Other research advises educators to tap ‘funds of knowledge’ from children’s communities, in order to enrich and transform these learners’ classroom experience (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Literacy occurring outside a school context can become a community resource and in such instances “families, local communities and organisations regulate and are regulated by literacy practices” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998: 13).

7.4 Limitations

While this research study was meant to illuminate the early childhood literacy practices in a multilingual township in Gauteng, I acknowledge that it is not without limitations. Although I gained entry into the research site and home environments of the learners, my findings cannot be generalised as a reflection of all township schools and homes in South Africa. First, a single researcher, working on a single school with its unique sociocultural history, conducted the current research. In addition, the uniqueness of the five different cases that were observed cannot be a generalisation of all township children in South Africa.

Second, the “distinction between in-school and out-of-school may set up a false dichotomy by foregrounding physical space (i.e., concepts outside the schoolhouse door) or time (i.e., after school programs), and we may ignore important conceptual dimensions that more readily account for successful learning or its absence” (Schultz & Hull, 2002: 12). We may fail to see the presence of school-like practice at home (Street & Street, 1991) or non-school like activities in the formal classroom (Schultz & Hull, 2002: 12). Cole (1995) warns against treating the notion of context as a container, as that which surrounds and therefore, of necessity, causes or influences or shapes.

Third, this research study only involved five learners and five educators in one school. Although the findings made could be substantiated, one cannot generalise the results as representative of the broader spectrum of learners and educators in all townships or the broader South African education community. Out-of-school literacy studies relying on a case study of young children’s literacy practices can also not be generalised to wider populations. This, however, is not to overlook the theoretical and pedagogical value derived from the study. Out-of-school studies have enormous value through their resonances with other researchers’ findings, with teachers’ in-school experiences with particular students, and with families’ experiences of school-home relationships (Knobel & Lankshear, 2003: 61). Nonetheless, there is a noted increase in published out-of school studies of young children’s literacy practices. This, hopefully, indicates an informed and critical

response by researchers to the increasingly constricted and test-based conceptions of literacy apparent in schools in the US, England, Australia, South Africa and elsewhere. Therefore, researchers are turning to detailed and contextualised accounts of young children's literacies in order to challenge what counts as literacy success' and 'failure' at school (Knobel & Lankshear, 2003: 61).

Fourth, the findings on the issue of dialects cannot be generalised as applicable to all South African indigenous languages. In some provinces where a few dialects exist, a different picture could emerge. In some provinces or areas, the dialects spoken are dominant dialects widely spoken by people residing in those areas. These dialects may also not conform to the standard dialects taught in school.

Fifth, the shortcomings and successes of GPLMS as an intervention strategy cannot be applied to the broader South African primary school spectrum because it is a provincial education strategy implemented only in Gauteng Province with socio-political and socioeconomic dynamics different from other provinces in the country. Findings from my study and other studies have revealed that the GPLMS programme has more shortcomings than successes.

Last, the validity of classification of schools as poorly performing is questionable as it is a GDE conception solely based on systematic evaluation achievement, which overlooks the sociocultural context behind those results. Moreover, the systematic tests used to measure the learners' performance have received a lot of criticism from different quarters as being flawed and lacking validity in many respects. Furthermore, there is very little literature available on poorly performing schools in relation to literacy levels in schools.

The findings and limitations of the study discussed thus far give rise to recommendations for further practice and research, which are presented, in the section that follows.

7.5 Recommendations

Given the findings, conclusions and limitations drawn on this study, this section presents the recommendations that the findings of this study elicited. The discussion begins by considering, first, the recommendations for parents. Second, it discusses recommendations for schools. Third, it presents recommendations for training institutions, and, fourth it makes recommendations for the Department of Basic Education. Finally, recommendations for future research are made.

7.5.1 Recommendations for parents

- Although this study did not demonstrate that the majority of the parents in townships do enroll their children in Grade R, educators highlighted the importance of Grade R. It is recommended that parents should enroll their children in Grade R because this can assist children to develop early literacy skills. Parents need to be made aware of the importance of the early formative years of childhood in cognitive development as deficits arising from a lack of early mental stimulation can result in children falling behind later in schooling (Govender, 2015: 347).
- Although Grade R may provide the background to literacy development, parents need to be made aware that Grade R attendance is not sufficient to prepare children for academic success. Children require ongoing support at home in which parents facilitate and encourage activities that promote literacy development.
- The study established that children are not reading for leisure at home. The lack of culture of reading raises questions about children's reading capabilities. Parents are encouraged to instill culture of reading in their children for them to develop positive attitude to reading.
- As the study established an absence of books in most homes, it is recommended that parents should assist their children access the library to expose them to various repertoires of texts.
- In cases where children have problems accessing the library, it is recommended that parents should help their children read online texts.

- Findings in this study established concerns about parents' participation in school related activities such as school meetings. Parents are encouraged to participate in school meetings and other school related activities. Parents have to be reminded that their participation in school activities does not only mean providing children with the necessary support in their school work but should extend to motivating learners to be more interested in school.
- Further, parents should interact with their children's educators regularly in order to be informed of the learners' progress, particularly in reading and writing. Areas of concern should be discussed and addressed.
- Parents should be made aware of the difference between English competence and proficiency. They should be aware that if a learner were competent in speaking and understanding English, the learner would not automatically become proficient in reading and writing in English. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills do not guarantee the achievement of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. The latter skill has to be cultivated and promoted by both parents and educators (Govender, 2015: 347).
- The study found that children lack competence in primary or home language. Parents should be informed about the importance of the development of learners' primary language. Parents need to be made aware that first language development is central to second language development. Parents should be informed that they should constantly expose their children to their home languages such as Setswana, isiZulu or isiXhosa to develop a solid base in home language.
- Parents should play an active role as mediators of learning and help their children engage with what they see and experience in their environment. They should promote critical thinking among children by asking them critical questions of what they perceive in their environment such as on television or in reading of books.
- The study established some skepticism among parents about their children using cellphones. Parents should be aware that cellphones and other

technology such as television and computer games could be valuable learning tools.

7.5.2 Recommendations for schools

- The study established a preference by educators to teach in English. Educators should understand that teaching in English differs from teaching English. It is imperative that educators understand the importance of developing the learners' L1 proficiency as prerequisite to learning L2. In the lower grades, educators should refrain from exclusively teaching in English.
- The study demonstrated educators' lack of understanding regarding teaching multilingual learners in multicultural environments. Educators require in-service training, focusing on teaching multilingual learners.
- The study found that rote learning and recitation dominated classroom practice in the early grades, which do not much promote literacy development. Educators should use a variety of teaching approaches and methods such as the phonic approach, the whole language approach and the language experience approach, in order to make learning both beneficial and interesting to learners. Schools should encourage educators to attend workshops to improve their teaching.
- When promoting a culture of reading, parents are encouraged to read to their children but educators should not presuppose that all parents are able to read.
- As the study established an absence of books in most homes, foundation phase educators should increase access to books and develop a reading culture by having library corners in their classrooms.
- This study found a chasm of understanding between educators and parents in terms of how best to collaboratively support children's learning. Interaction between parents and educators should be encouraged in which educators 'tap' local knowledge systems and sociocultural activities that can promote literacy development.
- A particularly worrying finding in the study is the low level of interaction between educators and parents. Schools should find possible ways of building functional parent-teacher partnerships. Schools and School Governing Bodies

should explore ways of encouraging parents to become more involved in their children's schooling and meet with educators frequently to discuss children's progress.

- Findings in this study also established that parents do not attend school meetings and other school related activities. Schools and school governing bodies should find ways to encourage parents to participate in school meetings and other school related activities.
- This study established that most educators in township schools do not only have problems with English language competence but have problems with African languages as well. This raises concerns about the quality of classroom instruction in the lower grades in which African languages are the LoLT. It is suggested that, in foundation phase in particular, schools should assign educators who are competent in the language of instruction at the level of cognitive academic language proficiency in reading, writing and speaking.
- Schools should understand that being a fluent speaker in a particular language does not automatically mean someone becoming a skilful language teacher. In fact, a first language speaker is found to be often unaware of the difficulties of learning the language for non speakers of that particular language (Jacobs, 1998).
- The study established that educators are ignorant of the social problems their learners face in their communities. Educators should be aware that the social problems that communities face do not only affect parent participation in school related activities but also affect learner performance.
- Further, this study established that educators lack understanding of family dynamics of communities in which they teach. For example, the breakdown in the family structure is a major social problem in most communities. In townships, many parents are single teenage mothers who dropped out of school either late in primary school or early in high school. Most of these young mothers do not actively participate in their children's education because of either their limited educational level or lack of parental responsibility. The scourge of HIV/AIDS has also left many children as orphans. These children

often stay with their grandparents, relatives or foster parents who may not necessarily be interested in these children's schooling. In some situations, these young children stay on their own or with older siblings who may also be children.

- Contrary to the educators' concern that parents do not assist their children with homework, the study established that most parents try to assist their children with homework. However, the following reasons were found to hinder parents from assisting children with homework: homework given with unclear instructions; homework given on work not yet done in class; amount of homework exceeding classwork; homework taking longer to complete and exceeding the young children's low concentration span; the level at which homework is pitched being higher for most parents to cope with. It is recommended that educators should make homework manageable for both parents and learners by addressing the concerns raised.
- Further, the study established that some parents or guardians cannot read or write. Educators should not presuppose that parents are able to read and write. Even those parents who went to school may not be able to read for meaning or able to teach children to read.
- The study also established that parents and guardians lack knowledge on how to assist children with school related work. It is recommended that schools should educate parents on how to assist their children with homework.
- The study established that many parents or guardians are always unavailable to assist their children with homework because they work long hours and barely have time for their children. It is recommended that schools should set aside a homework period to assist learners whose parents cannot assist them with homework. Schools should have teaching assistants to assist learners with homework during the homework period.
- The study found that children were using gadgets such as tablets and cellphones for learning and play at home. It is recommended that schools should use gadgets such as tablets and cellphones to teach learners how to access information, solve simple and complex problems, and play games.

- Although the study established that play is beneficial to learning, there is no evidence of educators, in this study, using play as a teaching approach. Educators should be encouraged to incorporate play in their teaching.

7.5.3 Recommendations for teacher training

- As the most critical strategy for addressing the literacy problem, initial teacher training should be prioritised. Initial teacher education programmes should produce graduates sufficiently equipped to teach critical skills such as reading.
- The education and training of practitioners in early childhood education is problematic because qualified practitioners are extremely few. The 2014 audit report on early childhood education found that half of the country's Grade R educators are unqualified or underqualified, some without even Matric. A rigorous training programme for Grade R practitioners should be undertaken.
- Institutions of Teacher Training should have a comprehensive pre-service training programme to equip educators with skills to teach in multilingual and multicultural schools.
- Teacher training should consist of Teaching Schools, similar to the one run by The University of Johannesburg in partnership with the Gauteng Department of Education. Such schools will equip trainee educators with practical school experience and modern pedagogy.

7.5.4 Recommendations for the Department of Basic Education

- The study established concerns about the successive changes in curriculum and educational policies. The numerous curriculum and policy changes are perceived as government failure to address problems in the education system. Before implementing curriculum changes, the Department of Basic Education should investigate reasons for low learner performance, such as poor pedagogy and lack of resources.
- It emerged from the study that most educators teaching foundation phase lack content base in teaching critical skills such as phonetics. The Department of Basic Education should sponsor or offer more content based pre-service and

in-service workshops to equip educators with subject-matter knowledge for the academic level they teach.

- What emerged from this study is that educators in primary schools are using old teaching methods such as chalk and board. It is recommended that the Department of Education should provide schools with modern learning and teaching material as well as equip educators with technology-based pedagogy in keeping with contemporary trends in education.
- Further, it is recommended that new and practising educators' teaching methods should be revamped to meet the needs of current learners. It is essential for educators to undergo ongoing professional development on modern technology blended classroom instruction.
- The Department of Basic Education should support the establishment of teaching schools in all provinces, in partnership with teacher training institutions.
- Although various provincial education departments have initiated training programmes for Grade R practitioners, qualified practitioners are still extremely few as compared with the number of untrained or underqualified ones. The Department of Basic Education should encourage unqualified practitioners to undergo training and provide them with incentives such as free tuition and support for those who are already working in early childhood centres.
- The provincial governments' training of foundation phase educators seems to concentrate on practitioners and educators in public schools but neglects those in the private sector. The national department of education should make it mandatory for all foundation phase educators, including Grade R practitioners, in both the public and private sector to be trained and registered with the South Africa Council of Educators.
- The study established that low-income areas such as townships have more informal than formal early childhood centres. For better monitoring and standardization of education in early childhood centres, it should be mandatory for all public and private early childhood centres to register with

the Department of Basic Education and other relevant departments. This initiative will help formalise early childhood education and monitor the quality of early childhood centres and practitioners.

- The Department of Basic Education should encourage provincial departments of education to introduce literacy improvement programmes in the foundation phase in all underachieving primary schools. However, provincial departments should not implement generic literacy programmes and interventions but should consider different sociocultural dynamics in different communities. It is recommended that the provinces and districts should design literacy improvement programmes that adapt to the sociocultural conditions of their learners.
- The literacy improvement programmes should not only benefit those who are already able to read for meaning by providing them with more opportunities to practise the skills they already have. They should also accommodate those who lack this skill.
- It is established that big class sizes in foundation phase hindered effective teaching and learning. The class sizes should be made smaller for educators to be able to support all learners and be able to detect those with learning difficulties for further support.
- It is recommended that the Department of Basic Education should not place much emphasis on schools' performance on the Annual National Assessment (ANA) because most learners in township and rural schools are not adequately prepared to take the tests because of language proficiency and other factors.
- The classification of schools as poorly performing seems to stigmatise underachieving schools. It is recommended that underachieving schools should be classified as schools needing support.
- Comprehensive in-service training should be provided to foundation phase educators to equip them with skills to teach multilingual classes. Further, the Department of Basic Education should provide training workshops to equip educators with skills for them to better navigate the complexities associated with teaching multilingual classes.

- The study established that young children use technology such as cellphones and television for learning and leisure at home. The Department of Basic Education should provide schools with learning and teaching technology such as tablets and smart boards. Further, the Department of Basic Education should have educators trained in e-learning and technology aided teaching.
- The study established that the fast pace in the organisation and spacing of lessons in policy documents such as GPLMS and CAPS does not promote effective learning and teaching. The documents seem to overlook contextual differences such as learners' reading and writing ability, and language competence. The relevant sections in these policy documents should be amended in order to accommodate the different developmental and ability levels of the foundation phase learners.
- The study established that learning and teaching materials such as scripted lesson plans promote poor classroom practices such as rote learning that limit educators' creativity and innovation. It is recommended that learning and teaching materials should be designed and compiled by competent education specialists in consultation with others, such as subject and language experts, practising and retired educators, principals, SGBs and parents.
- Findings of this study reveal that many different dialects spoken in South African townships permeate classrooms. It is recommended that major regional and township dialects should be accorded official LoLT status.
- The Department of Basic Education should train unemployed youths, with Matric or post-Matric qualifications, to be teaching assistants in low achieving schools in their communities. The teaching assistants will assist learners with homework and explain to learners the content or material in the dialects spoken in their townships. This initiative will not only improve the quality of education but also provide some form of employment to many unemployed young people in the country.

7.5.5 Recommendations for further research

- This study demonstrated that educators viewed Grade R as prerequisite of school performance in lower grades. Research should be conducted to establish the correlation between Grade R attendance and learner performance in the lower grades.
- This study demonstrated that parents are said to be not actively involved in school-related activities that can enhance their children's literacy levels. Further research could examine parental involvement in enhancing the literacy skills among foundation phase learners.
- This study revealed that parents, particularly in townships, do not possess appropriate skills to mediate school related activities such as reading and writing. Research should be undertaken to establish how parents can mediate school-based learning.
- Further research should investigate how parents with little or no formal schooling can mediate school-based learning.
- This study revealed that literacy practices such as bedtime reading are not a common practice in townships but this does not imply that children and parents do not engage in any sociocultural activities that promote literacy development. Research should investigate alternative literacy practices that promote early learning in townships.
- This study raised questions about the purpose of homework, which, in most cases, is pitched above the level of parents' understanding. Research should investigate how educators can make homework manageable for both learners and parents.
- More research should examine the low participation by the parents of foundation phase learners in school activities and explore ways of encouraging them to become more involved in school-related activities.
- The study established that children learn through play. Further research should investigate how play can be incorporated in classroom activities to facilitate literacy development in township schools.

- Very little literature is available on poorly performing schools in relation to literacy development. Further research is recommended in this area.
- In this study, class size is cited as a major problem in schools affecting both educator and learner performance. Different approaches to teaching large classes should be investigated.
- Most research on early childhood education has focused on urban and surrounding areas because of a lack of funds or means to extend the research to rural areas and townships. Findings of studies carried out in urban areas, such as the current study, cannot be generalised or adapted to the whole country. It is recommended that countrywide studies including children who live in remote areas should be conducted in order to establish a wider perspective of early childhood education.
- Lastly, large-scale research on literacy development in early years in this country should be conducted to explore the realities as well as the challenges to map the way forward for early childhood education.

7.6 Literacy improvement intervention model

This study established disjuncture between home and school. In trying to bridge the gap between home and school, a literacy improvement intervention model is proposed. The proposed intervention model would involve educators, parents and children. The model adopts the bilingual programme designed by Anderson and Anderson (2017) for Canadian refugee families where the researchers worked with children and families in socially diverse communities. The programme involved getting assistance from people from the communities they worked with, whom they termed 'cultural insiders' (Anderson & Anderson, 2017). The 'cultural insiders' acted as a link between the researchers and the communities and worked as co-facilitators in the programme. They recruited the families, planned sessions and acted as translators during the sessions, which helped ensure that families understood the concepts being discussed. They also provided valuable feedback, which was used by researchers to make necessary modifications of the programme. As Anderson and Anderson, (2017: 9) suggest, it is essential for a literacy improvement programme to fit within the sociocultural context of a

particular communities. The suggested family literacy intervention programme should be cultural appropriate and modelled along the different sociocultural contexts of townships. The suggested programme can be undertaken on weekends or evenings where parents, educators and learners can have a platform to share curriculum related matters. Selected members of the community can act as 'cultural insiders' and work as intermediaries between home and school to motivate and recruit families to participate in the programme in a culturally acceptable manner conforming to township cultural conventions. The 'cultural insiders' could be educators or people drawn from the local communities, who could be competent in the lingua franca of the township. That will enable them to facilitate the literacy programme and act as translators to the parents and children participating in the programme. Being members of the community 'cultural insiders' can ensure better interaction between home and school. As 'insiders' they will have the freedom to visit families and interact with them in their languages. The model would entail parents being taught curriculum matters, with 'cultural insiders' mediating in a language the parents speak. Through 'cultural insiders' parents would be taught how to assist children with homework and monitor their progress. In their interaction with educators, parents can also share their interactional and social experiences with their children that could have relevance to school literacies. These experiences can be used in the classroom to create a comprehensive and relevant learning environment. If conducted efficiently, and with dedication this family literacy model could improve literacy levels in the townships as research has found that such programmes can successfully improve "literacy in poor communities both in South Africa and in overseas" (Machet, 2002: 10). Further research has shown that for a programme of this nature to succeed developers should take cognisance of "interactional and cultural norms of families" (Baruthram, 2006: 264). Strong research evidence shows that improved parent involvement in children's schooling is highly beneficial to children's literacy development.

7.7 Conclusion

The South African education system is faced with challenges of low learner achievement particularly in foundation phase. Results of local and international tests conducted by the Department of Education and bodies such as PIRLS and SACMEQ, at primary school level show that the overwhelming majority of South African primary school learners are not learning to read and write at the levels laid out by the curricula. These results highlight concerns about reading and literacy levels in South African primary schools. In trying to address these poor literacy concerns, the South African government has tried to prioritise early childhood education development and restructuring of the national school curriculum several times. The restructuring of the curriculum has had insignificant impact on levels of learner achievement and literacy development because learners in primary school consistently under-perform in local and international assessments when compared with other countries in the region. This has sparked great concerns from educationists, parents and government.

This study reveals that children in the Foundation Phase experience literacy in different ways in school and through mediation by family members and during play. However, there seems to be a chasm of understanding between educators and parents in terms of how best to collaboratively support children's learning. The poor learner performance has necessitated the Gauteng Department of Education to implement intervention strategies aimed at improving learner performance. Key findings from this study reveal that such intervention strategies are inadequate in addressing the poor literacy levels in primary education. An important determining factor is the language of instruction in foundation phase and the language that the children are exposed to, at home. Children from multilingual settings are exposed to many different languages in their environment and most of them fail to master, competently, what is supposed to be their home language. In most instances, children are taught in a language they are either least fluent in or do not understand. What is also evident in this study is that most educators in township schools are a product of the inferior Bantu education and they have a weak mastery of English as a language of learning and

teaching. In addition, most educators lack critical teaching skills such as teaching reading.

This study investigated early childhood literacy practices in a multilingual township and in so doing attempted to contribute to extant knowledge in literacy development in the early years. Thus, this study utilised qualitative approaches to explore the children's in-school and out-of-school literacy practices that foster literacy development. The learners' literacy practices were investigated through intensive observations and interviews. Data also constituted artefacts and images.

At school level, the children's literacy practices were investigated through observations of lessons and interviews with five foundation phase educators from a single township primary school in the Westrand, Gauteng Province. Interviews with educators were used to establish the classroom practices and curriculum matters. The parent and educator interviews were also used to enrich the data gathered from observations. Additionally, interviews with the Gauteng Department of Education officials complemented data on curriculum and GPLMS that inform pedagogy in schools classified as poorly performing. Prominent themes emerging from this study include informal literacy practices, reading practices outside school, literacy practices at home, literacy practices during play, and learning with technology. All these factors contribute to a certain extent to the learners' literacy development. A key factor that appeared to affect the learners' literacy development was the chasm of understanding between educators and parents in terms of how best to collaboratively support children's learning. There is insurmountable evidence in this study, revealing disharmony between skills-based knowledge at school and children's experiences outside school.

Educators seemed to unanimously point out learners' language incompetence in mother tongue as a problem. On the contrary, this study found that the problem does not seem much to do with the medium of instruction, as with classroom practice. This study suggests that both English and mother tongue teaching suffer from poor classroom practice. Many educators are not mother tongue English

speakers. Besides struggling with English, they lack cognitive academic language proficiency. This is not an indictment on educators, but rather a simple fact of inadequate training and teacher education.

Some of the findings in this study concur with findings of studies conducted in South Africa and elsewhere. However, irrespective of the findings corresponding or differing from previous studies, all research contribute to knowledge base and understanding of early childhood literacies.

It is anticipated that the lucidity of this study will enhance the understandings of parents, educators, and educational authorities with regard to literacy in the early years. The findings of this study are also expected to provide educational authorities with valuable information to envision when preparing educational programmes for learners in low-income multilingual settings. It is also anticipated that researchers in the field of early childhood education will take cognisance of the recommendations provided for further research.

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APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

...	Incomplete speech
R	Researcher
Class1	First class
Class3	Third class
Learn4	Fourth learner
Learn6	Sixth learner
R	Researcher
()	Speech explanation
[]	English translation
(<i>laughing</i>)	Actions
<i>I think this is so</i>	Actual words in transcript (<i>italics</i>)
' '	Speech within dialogue

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title:

Proposed Title: Early childhood literacy practices in a multilingual township in Gauteng Province of South Africa.

Investigator:

Rockie Sibanda

Date:

10 August 2019

I hereby:

- Agree to be involved in the above research project as a participant.
- Agree that my child, _____ may participate in the above research project.
- Agree that my staff may be involved in the above research project as participants.

I have read the research information sheet pertaining to this research project and understand the nature of the research and my role in it. In addition, I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive the additional details I requested. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

- Please allow me to review the report prior to publication.

Name:

Phone or Cell
number:

e-mail address:

Signature:

UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

If applicable:

- I consent/assent to audio recording of my/the participant's contributions.
- I consent/assent to video recording of my/the participant's contributions.

Signature:

APPENDIX C

GRADE 3 EDUCATORS TIMETABLE

HL=7HRS FAL=4HRS MATHEMATICS=7HRS LIFE SKILLS=7HRS												
TIME DAYS	8:00 - 8H30	8:30 - 9:00	9:00 - 9:30	9:30 - 10:00	10:00 - 10:30	10:30 - 11:00	11:00 - 11:45	11:45 - 12:15	12:15 - 12:45	12:45 - 13:15	13:15 - 13:45	
FRIDAY	H/LANGUAGE WRITING (30MIN)	H/LANGUAGE SPELLING TEST	MATHEMATICS			FAL WRITING	FAL SPELLING TEST	K	V	E	R	B
			Counting (5min)	Mental maths	Remediation							
THURSDAY	Counting Mental maths (10min)	Remediation (15min)	MATHEMATICS			H/LANGUAGE INDEPENDENT/P AIR	H/LANGUAGE	K	V	E	R	B
			Lesson content	Classwork	Homework							
WEDNESDAY	FAL LISTENING AND SPEAKING (30MIN)	FAL SHARED READING	MATHEMATICS			Homework activity	CREATIVE ARTS(V)	K	V	E	R	B
			Counting (5min)	Mental maths	Remediation							
TUESDAY	Counting (5min) Mental maths (10min)	Remediation (15min)	MATHEMATICS			H/LANGUGE SHARED READING (30MIN)	H/LANGUGE LISTENING AND SPEAKING	K	V	E	R	B
			Lesson content (25min)	Classwork Activity	Homework activity							
MONDAY	H/LANGUAGE PHONICS (30MIN)	H/LANGUAGE HANDWRITING	MATHEMATICS			Counting (5min)	Homework	K	V	E	R	B
			HOME SHARED (30MIN)	LANGUAGE READING	Remediation							

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Educator interview questions

1. What qualifications do you have?
2. How many years have you been teaching Foundation Phase?
3. What have been the highlights of your career so far?
4. Do you think it is necessary for learners to attend grade R and pre-school before going to Grade 1?
5. What is your understanding of literacy competency?
6. Describe your ideal/best approach to literacy teaching.
7. Describe the challenges facing teachers in literacy teaching.
8. What are the challenges facing children in literacy learning, both outside and inside the classroom?
9. What is the role played by the GPLMS programme?
10. The introduction of the ANA was meant to address poor literacy. How far has it succeeded or failed its purpose?
11. What would you recommend should be done to improve the literacy levels in our schools? (either by teachers, schools, SGBs, parents, DoE).

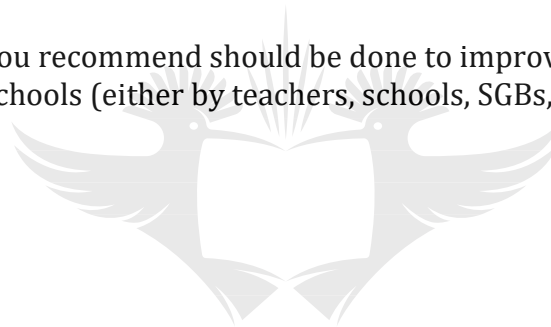
Parents interview questions

1. What standard of education do you have?
2. At home, does your child participate in activities associated with developing literacy competence? How, when, what kind?
3. Do you think technology such as use of computers, video games, cell phones or TV can be part of the literacy development of your child at home? In what way? Should they be used at school? How?
4. What are your expectations for instruction in literacy at school?
5. Do you or any member(s) of your family ever read with /to your child? What do you or they read? Do you think it is important to read with or to your child? Why?

6. Do you assist your child with homework? What assistance do you offer him/her? What difficulties do you encounter when doing so?
7. What are the challenges facing your child in developing literacy competence? What do you think should be done to overcome them?

District Officials interview questions

1. Describe in detail the form of support that the DoE offers to learners/teachers in literacy teaching/improvement.
2. What are the challenges facing teachers in literacy teaching?
3. What is the role played by the GPLMS programme?
4. The introduction of the ANA was meant to address poor literacy in primary schools. How far has it succeeded or failed its purpose?
5. What would you recommend should be done to improve the literacy levels in our schools (either by teachers, schools, SGBs, parents, DoE)?



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APPENDIX E

SAMPLES OF TRANSCRIPTS

1. Interviews with educators

Interview with Ms. Ms Dube (9 February 2013)

It is a Monday morning when I interview Ms Dube. She is both a teacher and parent participant as she has a child in the third grade in the school. She is comfortable with having the interview at school.

- R: What standard of education do you have?
Ms Dube: I have a Teacher's Diploma
R: How many years have you been teaching Foundation Phase?
Ms Dube: Maybe ke 9 years because keile ka-starter ko Intersen (*Maybe its 9 years because I started in intersen*)
R: What qualifications do you have?
Ms Dube: HED
R: What have been the highlights of your career so far?
Ms Dube: *Things have changed...neh? Akere ke-statile vele ke teacher foundation phase. Things have changed, neh! I used to enjoy teaching ...ke gore the learners...when I started teaching ke gore ga ke kena mo filding I used to enjoy teaching. Parents were very much involved mo mosebetsing wa bana and that made mosebetsi waka as a teacher very much easier because when you communicated with the parents ba kofa feedback le wena o bafa feedback which made my job much simpler. When you communicated le di parents ne ba mamela and gonna much easier. Ne re tswarisana mmogo because the teacher o tshwere rope this side le di parents so bana le bone ne ba mamela.*
Things have changed...isn't it? Isn't it, I just started by teaching foundation phase. Things have changed, isn't it? I used to enjoy teaching...in fact the learners...when I started teaching...in fact when I entered the teaching field, I used to enjoy teaching. Parents were very much involved in learners' work and that made my job as a teacher much easier because when you communicated with the parents they would give you feedback and you give them feedback. It made my job much simpler. When you communicated with parents, they listened and it became easier. We used to assist each other because it was like the teacher is holding the rope this side together with the parents so the children also used to understand)
R: Do you think it is necessary for learners to attend grade R and pre-school before going to Grade 1?
Ms Dube: *Akeitsi ketla reng yes or no...because grade R yaba prepera but even le before nna ha re kena skolo ne go sena grade R schools. Di parents tsa rona ne di re prepera for school.*

I don't know what I can say...yes or no...because grade R prepares but even in the past when we went to school there were no grade R schools. Our parents prepared us for school.

R: In what way? (*Asking in inquisitively*).

Ms Dube: *A kere ko Gaye ne go rutiwa counting in your language...go e tsiwa. Ne o rotiwa...nne ba go prepera nje the language e re ne re itsing gore is used at school. So gwa tshwana there is no difference. So goya kanna because goba le ngwana o kereya gore ngwana osakena grade R but is more advanced wa pefoma go feta okene grade R. Goya kanna le environment yamo prepera ngwana for school.*

Isn't it at home we were taught how to count in our language...doing...you were taught...they would just prepare you for the language which they knew was used at school. So it's just the same. There's no difference. So according to me because you can find a child who never did grade R but is more advanced. He performs better than the one who did grade R. according to me, the environment also prepares the child for school.

R: What is your understanding of literacy competency?

Ms Dube: *Like as I was saying pele go ne gosena dikolo tsa grade R. O ne o tswa gaye ole school ready. Bana ba batona go rona ne ba bala di story le di poem and re di krema. I think ga ngwana a gona go tlhaloganya a story then retell it ka tsela ya gage or adrowe di pictures. O bonntsha gore she understands the concept...aka gona go kwala paragraph to show gore wa-understand story.*

Like as I was saying, in the past there were no grade R schools. You would leave home school ready. Children older than us they would read the stories and poems to us and we would cram them. I think it means when a child is able to comprehend a story and narrate it in his own way or illustrate by drawing a picture, he understands the concept. He can write a paragraph to show that he understands the story

R: Describe your ideal/best approach to literacy teaching.

Ms Dube: *Ke teacher di-vowel sounds then continue to words le di pictures. Bana ba tshwanetsi go matcher di pictures le mafoko then ba etsa di sentences then ba etsa di paragraphs.*

I teach the vowel sounds then continue to words and pictures. Children are supposed to match the picture with the words then construct sentences then form paragraphs.

R: Describe the challenges facing teachers in literacy teaching.

Ms Dube: *Learners are uncontrollable now it gonna difficult to achieve good results as a teacher so in fact the government wa rona o re oprositse too much. We don't have any say. Pele o ne o itse gore ga ngwana asa etsa mosebetsi o ne omo-threatener o re you won't go for break. Now that doesn't happen because bare ke abuse. So le bana they have no interest in their school work. They don't do their homework. Even in class if they don't want to work ha ba kwale mosebetsi wa bona so gonna difficult for rona as teachers. A re enjoy mosebetsi wa rona as before.*

Learners are uncontrollable now. It becomes difficult to achieve good results as a teachers so in fact our government has oppressed us too much. We don't have any say. In the past you knew that if a child has not done his work you would threaten him saying you won't go for break. Now that doesn't happen because they say its abuse. So the children they also don't have interest in their school work. They don't do their homework. Even in class, they don't do their own work so it becomes difficult for us as teachers. We don't enjoy our work as before.

Ms Dube: *Teachers aba gone go disciplina bana. Ngwana o senang discipline cannot learn...di parents di ya tena at times...you tell a parent gore ngwana wa gage cannot read so she must try to make her practice to read at home. The parent will say what is your job? You are paid to make my child know how to read. Even school management is not supportive if you keep a child after school you get charged.*

Teachers cannot manage to discipline the children. A child who doesn't have discipline cannot learn. The parents are also frustrating. You tell a parent that her child cannot read so she must try to make her practice to read at home. The parent will say what is your job? You are paid to make my child know how to read Even school management is not supportive if you keep a child after school you get charged.

R: What are the challenges facing children in literacy learning, both outside and inside the classroom?

Ms Dube: *Bana haba tlhaloganye even le home language ya bona. Ha bana proper home language. O kereya gore Rre wa ngwana ke Motswana...Mme ke moVenda and the child plays with Zulu children. Ngwana onna confused. Le school language policy is worse. Bana aba bala grade 3 bayetsa English Home language and Setswana First Additional Language. It is difficult. The English language is foreign. English is worse because ke ya maguwa le ma Model Cs. Ga re kena skolo ne ke rutiwa kaSetswana until grade 4. Ne re etsa just basic English ya di rhyming words and di poem ne di le easy. Outside school some parents aba tlhaloganye English so aba kgone go thusa bana ba bona ka homework.*

Children don't understand even their home language. They don't have proper home language. You find that the father of the child is Tswana and the mother is Venda and the child plays with Zulu children. The child gets confused. The school language policy is also worse. Children who are in grade 3 are doing English Home Language and Setswana First Additional Language. The English language is foreign. English is worse because it is White people's language and the Model Cs. When we went to school we were taught in Setswana until grade 4. We just did just Basic English of rhyming words and the poems which were easy. Outside school some parents don't understand English so they are unable to assist their children with homework.

- R: What is the role played by the GPLMS programme?
- Ms Dube: *Well GPLMS go dependa ka individual teacher. Ke mosebetsi o mongata for ma teachere. They expect gore o dire about 4 activities a day. Learners get tired and bored. They don't even complete the activities. The teacher is expected to follow a teaching programme which has a date and time when it must be covered. Even if bana ba sa tlhaloganye you just move on to the next lesson.*
Well GPLMS depends on the individual teacher. It's a lot of work for the teachers. They expect that you do about 4 activities a day. Learners get tired and bored. They don't even complete the activities. The teacher is expected to follow a teaching programme which has a date and time when it must be covered. Even if children don't understand you just move on to the next lesson.
- R: The introduction of the ANA was meant to address poor literacy levels. How far has it succeeded or failed its purpose?
- Ms Dube: *I don't see any success. The question papers are too long. Di question di ya tshwana year in and year out. This makes gore ke belife gore di results tsa ANA are not a true reflection ya bana. Teachers bana le pressure to make learners pass because if they don't, their school will be classified PPS. Teachers concentrate on ANA the whole year and drilling learners to pass. They don't teach learners...they spend more time on ANA and paper work...di 450D retention schedules le di evidence tsa go retheina ngwana.*
I don't see any success. The question papers are too long. The questions are the same year in and year out. This makes me to believe that the results of ANA are not a true reflection of children. Teachers have a lot of pressure to make learners pass because if they don't, their school will be classified PPS. Teachers concentrate on ANA the whole year and drilling learners to pass. They don't teach learners. They spend more time on ANA and paper work, the 450D retention schedules and the evidence that is used to retain a learner.
- R: What would you recommend should be done to improve the literacy levels in our schools? (either by teachers, schools, SGBs, parents, DoE).
- Ms Dube: *Educators don't have a say mo educationeng ya bana. Every Minister o tlang o tla ka programme ya gage. I think we must go back to basics.*
Educators don't have a say in the education of children. Every Minister who comes brings a new programme. I think we must go back to basics.
- R: What do you mean by that?
- Ms Dube: *I mean we must go back to basics and teach ka Setswana and only introduce English ka grade four. Di parents batina. My child is 9 years old. She is different. Di parents abana interest in their children's education. They say charity begins at home. Ngwana o tshwanetsi o morute responsibility. Ga o bitsa motswadi o tla*

discussa progress ya ngwana ha atle and ga attend di meeting or go tla collecta progress report ya ngwana. Le government ae re protect. Will always shift the blame go rona the teachers.

I mean we must go back to basics and teach in Setswana and only introduce English at grade 4. The parents are a nuisance. My child is 9 years old. She is different. The parents don't have interest in their children's education. They say charity begins at home. You have to teach your child responsibility. If you call a parent to come and discuss the progress of his child he doesn't come and doesn't attend meetings or to collect the child's progress report. The government also doesn't protect us. Will always shift the blame on us teachers.

2. Interviews with GDE District Officials

Interview with District Official 1 (3 May 2013)

R: Describe in detail the form of support that the DoE offers to learners/teachers in literacy teaching/improvement.

Ms Thwala: Teachers are given an opportunity to enrol at Matthew Goniwe to improve their literacy teaching. They do an ACE course. GPLMS was introduced to primary schools where poor learner performance was observed. The programme consists of direct instructional coaching for both English and Maths teaching. Educators are assisted to improve content knowledge and classroom practices. Lesson plans and resource materials are issued to teachers but first they are work-shopped on how to use lesson plans and resource materials. Key teaching methodologies are demonstrated by coaches to the teachers.

R: What are the challenges facing teachers in literacy teaching?

Ms Thwala: Learners coming to grade 3 come to the intermediate phase with limited English. All the subjects were taught in mother tongue and now learners are expected in the IP to learn all subjects in English. Teachers find it difficult to adhere to the notional times to address the skills (time on task). Teachers find it difficult to plan. Resources are not utilised during teaching. Most concepts are being taught in the abstract. Real objects and pictures are not used to teach foreign concepts to learners. They do not know how to do intervention during teaching and not do it in isolation from teaching. They usually don't know how to address learners with barriers. They have challenges in how to control learners' books and setting up quality exams and tasks.

R: Explain the role played by the GPLMS programme?

Ms Thwala: GPLMS was introduced to improve literacy levels. It was meant to have 60% of the learners to achieve 50% by the end of 2014. The approach was to give all educators scripted lesson plans with key methodologies. Readers and theme posters were given to enhance teaching. The theme posters were used to help

learners with vocabulary building activities. Teachers were given phonics workshops that assisted them with learners that had reading problems. Teachers had to make flash-cards with new reading words and spelling words. They were encouraged to use real objects, pictures or gestures to emphasize meaning. The same methodologies were used to listening and speaking, reading and spelling lessons. School based workshops were conducted by the coaches on school related challenges regarding literacy. Professional Learning Groups were conducted by coaches for all schools on common challenges.

R: The introduction of the ANA was meant to address poor literacy in primary schools. How far has it succeeded or failed its purpose?

Ms Thwala: It has been successful because teachers, HODs and Principals are held accountable for poor learner performance. ANA has been able to keep track of the levels of literacy and to find out what the gaps are in individual schools. ANA's failure is that teachers just teach for ANA. ANA is no longer used as a diagnostic tool to identify weaknesses in the system or in schools or teachers but used to classify schools.

R: What would you recommend should be done to improve the literacy levels in our schools (either by teachers, schools, SGBs, parents, DoE)?

Ms Thwala: Schools should appoint teachers who can teach English and regularly monitor them. Schools must mentor, evaluate and give feed-back and support teachers. They must buy adequate resources to enhance teaching and learning. SGB's must raise funds in order to hire SGB teachers to have smaller classes. Curriculum matters must be discussed in SGB meetings. Parents must be more involved in their children's education. They must attend parents meetings and constantly check homework and learner books. The DoE must appoint teachers and HOD's on merit not on union affiliation. The DoE must sponsor and offer more content based workshops.

Interview with District Official 2 (6 May 2013)

R: Describe in detail the form of support that the DoE offers to learners/teachers in literacy teaching/improvement.

Mr Nunu: We support them by conducting workshops to help them with planning and methodology. We offer schools lesson plans, posters and prescribed books. Officials visit schools on regular basis to monitor progress with the GPLMS.

R: What are the challenges facing teachers in literacy teaching?

Mr Nunu: Teachers are supposed to teach in home languages. This is a huge challenge as both learners and teachers don't have sufficient language proficiency. Learners in the Foundation Phase battle with home language because in most cases the

languages they are taught in are not their home languages. Teachers have problems as learners haven't acquired language proficiency in their mother tongue. In some schools they receive material in English and teachers are expected to translate to Zulu, Tswana and other languages. To tell you the truth that's a fatal mistake that government is making as teachers aren't professional translators so the learners suffer in the midst of mistranslation. Most teachers do not know how to address problems with learning barriers. That's why many learnings go through the primary system without knowing how to read and write competently.

R: What is the role played by the GPLMS programme?

Mr Nunu: The GPLMS was introduced assist the PPS schools address their poor literacy levels. It targeted mostly township schools that attained below 50% in ANA. The strategy is meant to encourage systematised collaborative teaching as teachers use the same approach to maths and literacy teaching. The lesson plans are meant to help teachers with standardised lesson plans for effective teaching. The assessments accompanying the lesson plans address the demands of CAPS and prepare learners for ANA. Schools are provided with readers and theme posters to improve quality of learning and teaching. The theme posters help teachers conceptualise their practice. Learners are exposed to new vocabulary which they can adapt to their everyday knowledge. Unlike in the past where teachers could teach anyhow, this strategy ensures that teachers teach the same stuff at the same time. This means thorough preparation for ANA.

R: The introduction of the ANA was meant to address poor literacy in primary schools. How far has it succeeded or failed its purpose?

D/02: ANA are systematic evaluation meant to measure the learners' maths and literacy competence. By the way you assured me that you won't mention my name? (*Seeking assurance*).

R: Yes, Sir. Your identity will remain anonymous.

Mr Nunu: Honestly speaking the ANA results are political gamble where the government is trying to give credibility to its failed policies. The results are embarrassingly 'doctored' to give a false impression that there's a massive improvement in our system. There are so many cases of reported suspected cheating by both teachers and learners which are swept under the carpet. The department of education places schools under tremendous threat that teachers even literally read questions for the learners and literally give them correct answers. Who would like his school to be classified as PPS? Actual classroom teaching is overshadowed by just teaching for ANA as teachers drill their learners almost every day to help them pass with better results.

R: What would you recommend should be done to improve the literacy levels in our schools (either by teachers, schools, SGBs, parents, DoE)?

Mr Nunu: I'd suggest that the department (DoE) set realistic goals and admit that there is problem in our education system instead of passing the blame on poor teachers. Principals should encourage their teachers to attend workshops to improve their teaching. When deciding on language of teaching, schools and SGBs must do their homework properly and choose a language that the majority speaks. If it's the African languages they must appoint competent first language speakers. For instance if the LoLT is Zulu they must employ a Zulu speaking person from KZN and if its Tswana they can get a pure Motswana from Mafikeng or Zeerust. Our kids are taught Home language by teachers who know the township lingua. This has serious repercussions on literacy development. Some of the GPLMS material has a lot of conceptual and language errors. I think its high time government stopped having novices design material and employ competent experts to do the job effectively. The SGB's must be trained and work shopped on curriculum matters and school governance. If the learner-teacher ratio was reduced to maybe 30 learners to 1 teacher, I the teachers will be able to give all learners intense individual attention. Teachers can then be able to devote much of their time on those learners with learning barriers such as poor reading ability.

3. Interviews with parents

Interview with Tumelo's Parents (16 February 2013)

It as a Saturday when I visit Tumelo's home. Unlike my previous visit when it was raining heavily, today the sky is clear. I had made arrangements to visit during the week. Tumelo's family have moved residence since I last visited them. They now have shack in a churchyard, in a different section of Katlego. Tumelo is not home when I arrive at her home. Her parents inform me that she's out playing with her friends. The interview is carried out in her absence. His parents insist that I call them by their first names: Mr Miya (father) and Mrs Miya (mother).

R: What standard of education do you have?

Mrs Miya: *Kgona yano ke* (At the moment I'm) busy...I am doing my B.Ed. degree with UNISA

R: That's great news...*ga o semolestse go stadisha* (if you start studying) you must never stop. *A kere wabona le nna ke yastatisha*. [As you can see, I'm also studying].

Mr Miya: I have matric and I am now doing my studies in Theology.

R: At home, does your child participate in activities associated with developing literacy competence? How, when, what kind?

Mr Miya: *Nama puzzles uyawenza*. [She even does puzzles].

- Mrs Miya: *Wabala...wakwala...le di puzzles wa di etsa.* [She reads, writes, and does puzzles].
- R: *O bala eng?* What does she read?
- Mrs Miya: Yes she does, although she likes playing too much. *Ko skolong ko na le* [At school there's a] library so she gets books from the library. She reads books from the school library. We encourage her to read because everyone in the house is reading. When I am busy with my books, her father will be reading on the other side.
- Mr Miya: She reads at home...she's hardworking...she's self-motivated.
- R: Do you think technology such as use of computers, video games, cell phones or TV can be part of the literacy development of your child at home? In what way? Should they be used at school? How?
- Mrs Miya: Yah, I do...Cell phones are very useful...sometimes she gets books from mixit that I did register her on. At times she can '*google*' some words that she doesn't know. But cell phones have to be monitored otherwise our child may mix with bad people. TV is a very important tool for learning. Programmes like *Takalani Sesame* are very helpful to children. They learn new words as they show everyday activities such as shopping. They also show life in the rural areas that our children don't know about as they were born in towns. It's a pity that they are aired when children are at school. I think schools must have a period when children can watch child programmes that they watch at home. I think that could make school interesting.
- R: Do you think that can be used in the classroom?
- Mr Miya: That can be added in a sense *eyokuthi* (that) how are they going to go about it because of the thing of social network and they are not properly monitored they can get out of hand so they need to be closely monitored. In a case *yabantwana abalingana nabo Tumelo* (of kids Tumelo's age)...at her age she's nine now. If you don't properly manage things like this, they might just end up chatting to wrong people who might just lead them to do things that as parents and teachers we will regret to.
- R: What are your expectations for instruction in literacy at school?
- Mrs Miya: Honestly speaking, time is something that we don't have. We spend eight hours...teachers spend most of the time with our kids...there're teachers *aba roganang bana* [who are verbally abusive]. They shouldn't do that. I expect teachers to be patient with our children, *babatrite* like *bana babona* [and treat them like their own children]. In most cases they bring home work with unclear instructions. We expect them to speak proper Setswana with our children.
- R: But how would you like your child to be taught literacy skills?
- Mrs Miya: You know it's different...*lone* we used to get a teacher who would teach as a calling...right now it's not like that...teachers don't care...our kids are not taught to read or write properly. If I as a parent don't take the initiative to teach my child to read at home she will suffer badly.

- R: Do you or any member(s) of your family ever read with /to your child? What do you or they read? Do you think it is important to read with or to your child? Why?
- Mr Miya: The thing of reading she takes it mostly from us. She read a lot of children's novels...we both read a lot of novels so I think also kids when they look at you as parents reading that also motivates them. Sometimes it's nice to read because reading takes a lot out of you but because of...we want to instil something to our children that reading is fun and through reading you get to grow and even your level of communication and your level of understanding becomes advanced. In fact you advance yourself by reading because if you don't read you are not going to advance. You're always going to lack somewhere so for you not to lack you ought to read.
- Mrs Miya: And for me my school projects, they do motivate me to read because they require me to observe my child reading. I usually read to her and ask her questions to see if she understood. If she reads books from school I ask her to explain what the story is about. The problem she has is spelling. The words in the books are too difficult...like not African. They refer to America. And when she explains, she struggles to express herself in both Setswana and English. I don't know what language our kids speak. It is nice to read with my child because I can correct her pronunciation and also explain difficult words she meets.
- Mr Miya: Here in this home we read a lot. I read for my Theology studies and the mother is reading her teaching books. She takes about two books from the school library and we monitor her when reading.
- R: Do you assist your child with homework? What assistance do you offer him/her? What difficulties do you encounter when doing so?
- Mrs Miya: Honestly, we don't have time for homework. We come home tired and don't have time to assist my child with homework. Most of the work they do is too difficult for me as a parent what more a small kid.
- Mr Miya: Everyday...even if they don't have homework we create one for her, you know, in order for her to develop a culture of learning...like I said, we need to instil the culture that if you're doing your school work is important....if *wena awuz'kwenza umsebenzi weskolo* (you're not going to) do you expect us to do it for you. It's not about us. We are not at school. We've done school a long time ago. At the moment I'm attending Bible College and I'm reading every day. You understand that her mother is reading her stuff for education and I'm reading myself and that shows that these people want to see themselves somewhere. And *nathi singabantwana* (as kids) we've to see ourselves somewhere because at the end of the day any parent would want to see their child doing better than they've done and that is exactly what we want out of our children.

- R: What are the challenges facing your child in developing literacy competence? What do you think should be done to overcome them?
- Mr Miya: My child struggles with Setswana. The problem is that her friends don't speak proper Setswana. Even here in the house we use different languages. She speaks Setswana with her mother but I speak IsiXhosa with her, which is my language. I think teachers must also work hard to explain difficult words to our kids. Even in meetings you hear teachers speak *Tsotsi Taal*. That's creating a wrong example to our kids. As you know, I'm in the SGB and last year I asked why we are a poorly performing school (PPS) school. The principal's explanation was that he was still new. This I asked again this this year and teachers said parents don't help the children. How can I help in the teaching of the children? I'm not a teacher and don't know any methods of teaching. I wish to see the teachers spending more time teaching my child how to read and understand, especially Setswana and English.
- Mrs Miya: Tumelo *ga buwi* (doesn't talk)...even if *anali* (she has) homework you'd rather go and sit in her room...so when we ask she will she will say she has homework...so if you can't speak *go nna* (to me) how do you speak *ko skolong* (at school)? The thing of not speaking...she doesn't communicate but you see her with her friends...when they have books...shouting *eng e re etsa ko* (that thing we did in) social science...OK with her friends she speaks nicely and I pretend as if I'm not hearing anything.
- R: Well that's how kids are. Thank you so much for answering my questions. I will come again to speak to Mr Miya about his role in the SGB.

Interview with Mr Miya, Tumelo's father (13 December 2013)

It is a Saturday morning, when I meet with Mr Miya again to interview him about his role in the School Governing Body SGB. It's a Sunday afternoon and Mr Miya is just from church. He's expecting me as I'd arranged the interview the previous week.

- R: *Tata* (Sir), are you still in the SGB?
- Mr Miya: Yes I am...I am.
- R: The government is saying South African children can't read and they come last in the literacy tests. What is the role played by the SGB in improving literacy levels in schools?
- Mr Miya: The role at the moment, let's just say as a challenge we're facing *kahle kahle yikuthi* [in fact] here's the SGB...here's the teacher component. And now we are not working together for the betterment of the education of our children and now it creates animosity to some degree that these ones think they're better. At the end of the day I think lack of communication also takes

place...you understand. You think SGB they're teachers. They take information from there...from those ones you find that there's communication breakdown of some sort. I don't know but we're not working together as we are supposed to be because the SGB is only needed when there's only money needed.

R: Teachers say the problem of children not developing literacy skills is that parents are not active. What do you say about that?

Mr Miya: That I totally agree...I fully agree!

R: Not particularly you but other parents...

Mr Miya: No that I agree...I fully agree. I think this thing....this thing...I don't really blame them. Other thing...you've got to understand that it's one generation to the next. Everything it's a generation chain but someone somewhere has got to break this chain. When we grew up our parents never liked to attend school meetings. They'd just take you to school. Whether there are meetings, they wouldn't care. And now you are growing up with you knowing that going to school meetings it's a waste of time because the parents would say *bayahlanya* (they are crazy) so *bafunani* (what do they want). *Amathitshere wenu la into yabo yikufundisa*. These teachers of yours, their job is to teach, that's it. And now you must understand that you are planting something into a child's mind. Now these children now....those 10 years...15 years ago...now they're parents.

R: Hmm...you imply that they also have that mentality?

Mr Miya: Exactly! Now that mentality *yokuthi matichere athanya* (that teachers are crazy)...what is the parents saying now? He or she is saying the same thing to his or her child. So it's a problem. It's a chain that needs to be broken but we are not going to break it now and we are not going to break it easy. It's a process. It's something also that when I speak every time with parents, I say we need to break this chain because it's what I've observed and it's what I've seen *ukuthi* (that) this is happening and it needs to be broken. I don't blame parents but again I blame them *ukuthi* (because) at the end of the day the future of your child is dependent upon you as a parent. You're the one who's directing that the child will have a better future or you destroy it.

R: There was also the issue of the language policy. There's a concern by some people that the language used at school is not 'user friendly' if I may say. What is your opinion on this?

Mr Miya: Which language?

R: Like in the Foundation Phase, the Home Language issue.

Mr Miya: If I may answer that question...if they say the language is not user friendly, when kids go at home what language are they using?

R: That was exactly their concern.

Mr Miya: It's not a concern. I don't think it's a concern that much. It's the approach of teaching...how you teach...you know...I said once in a meeting, for me to be good in maths it was through my teacher.

I think the method of teaching his maths...if he wasn't good, at primary level I wouldn't have achieved but because of the way he taught and what he instilled in us when he was teaching maths, it stayed with most of his students till today. So it's through you teachers that a child will be motivated. I can motivate as much as I can at home. I can do so much at home because when I come home *sifika ngo six* (we arrive at 6). We only have two hours before the kids go to sleep. When we leave, we leave here at 5 when they are asleep. When they wake up, we are not here. We're gone...long gone. Probably when they leave, we are already at work.

R: The argument is that in Foundation Phase children are supposed to be taught in their Home language. It is argued that the children don't know their Home languages to the extent that some parents think that it is better for them to be taught only in English. What do you think of that?

Mr Miya: I don't have any issues with kids being taught in English. English at the end of the day it's one language that they will go and probably converse with in their interviews and all that. But do not make children feel like all home language is inferior to English because their Home language comes first more than English. That's what needs to be instilled to all kids across South Africa. You know that your Home language is better than the English language because the English language is not your language. It's not your mother tongue. Your mother tongue is Venda, Shangaan, Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana...you know...Ndebele, Swati...you know etcetera...etcetera...so that is very important that we instil it to our children at as young as *uJunior engaka* (Junior's age). We must instil the value of our language. Yes, I may take my child to a multiracial school...you know there's one type of people I like... the Afrikaner people. Afrikaner people they don't compromise their language for nothing and for no man...*uya andastenda* (do you understand?). Their language is their language and they are proud of it. Either *jy praat* or *jy praat nie. Maar as jy* (you speak or you don't speak. But you)... if you come in front of an Afrikaner person, he'll demand you speak in Afrikaans. He will tell you *en kan nie hoor, ek kan nie engels praat* (that I cannot hear and can't speak English). Not that *lo muntu lo akayazi i-English* (this person doesn't know English). This person can speak English fluently but because of they are proud of who they are. He's an Afrikaner man, *uya andastenda* (do you understand?). *Nathi*, (We also) if you speak Shangaan and be proud of being Shangaan and be proud of being Zulu *uya anstenda* (do you understand?)...because sometimes I will meet you and you say *heyi munna why o sa buwa se khuwa kere no ake le khuwa nna* (hey man, why don't you speak English, I will say I'm not white)...I'm not white. Why must I speak English everywhere I go? I will speak only if necessary. If it's necessary I will speak but I'd rather speak Tswana with a Tswana person

uya anstenda (do you understand?)...I will speak...*ngizo zama ke isiVenda nomuntu okhuluma isiVenda noma ngizophelela endleleni* (I'd even try Venda when speaking with a Venda speaking person) even though I will get stuck. I am not an English man. That is not what I am. I'm Xhosa. I will speak my Xhosa because like you saying our language are suffering because of *isilungu* (English) *uya andastenda* (do you understand?)...now even *nabantwana bethu* (our kids) they feeling *ukuthi* (that) if you not speaking English you are not clever enough or you are not educated and being uneducated is not about the language.

R: They say that these kids understand better when they are spoken to in English. They say that they don't understand if the teachers speak pure SeTswana. What is your opinion on that?

Mr Miya: Now, Mr Sibanda this is what I can tell you. They teach Setswana in a North West type of language. Now we've dialects. We speak Tswana both of us, for example you speak North West Setswana. I speak Gauteng Setswana but because of dialects that's what becomes a problem. The problem is not the language. The problem is the dialect. What is written here it's written in pure Tswana but because of I'm used to my dialect, the second grade Tswana that's what makes it a problem. As is now this one is difficult. There's nothing difficult with Tswana it's just that now if I'm being taught in the real language, it becomes a core one.

R: But the issue is that the school books are written in the so called standard Tswana which means that these children are not exposed to that at home. What do you say about that?

Mr Miya: This is still what I'm saying...dialect...you see here...the whole of Kagiso...they've their own way of style of speaking Tswana. You go to Mohlakeng. They've their own style of speaking Tswana. You go to Sebokeng...OK in Sebokeng they start speaking Sotho but Carltonville...Khutsong...they speak their own different type of Tswana...even in Zeerust, Mafikeng, Rustenburg, they speak different Tswana...go to Taung, Klerksdorp, Kimberly...their Tswanas are not the same. That's what I say Mr Sibanda Hamba...I don't have to like but it has to be taught. It has to be instilled. If they are not gonna be taught their own language now we are going to lose the next generation. They won't even know this language.

R: Is it that some of the teachers don't know the language?

Mr Miya: Exactly what I said...approach...the approach of even the language itself it's wrong because of...yes...because I may not be that much eloquent in speaking pure Tswana but make an effort. That shows that some teachers they just not doing their research. A real teacher will do his or her own research before they even go to class. How many Tswana speakers that that they meet that speak real Tswana. That will help you and say OK this is what I'm coming across and tomorrow in my class. This does not mean that because you are a teacher you know

everything....as a teacher you don't know everything...because of pride some are just afraid of approaching just an ordinary person and say if I go to this uneducated person to ask them...they are not going to take me seriously. Because if you go to that person, those are the same who know the language and the idiom and all those things. They'll give you exactly what you want.

R: Do you think that people have a different conception of being educated?

Mr Miya: Education is not books...my mother seated here could know a lot about my Xhosa language than a professor of Xhosa who knows what he reads in books. She may know folk songs and their meanings and different Xhosa rituals which form our culture and language...which educated people don't take seriously. That's what I'm saying that the same teachers don't go to the people who have got the knowledge and the know-how...because if they've gone and researched about things we wouldn't have such a problem.

R: What do you think about materials such as books and worksheets that are used in schools?

Mrs Miya: Most of the words are not even standard Tswana. I think they're written by people who are connected to education officials. I think they just write township street-Tswana without doing any research.

Mr Miya: Exactly what I was saying. I was saying they simply don't want to learn. If the teacher sees that there are errors, he must...he must teach the children the right thing...which means our children *balimele* (are doomed)...so government is to blame for employing such teachers.

R: But isn't you the SGB are involved in employment of teachers?

Mr Miya: Not with our school...but even though someone is not speaking the language and is willing to learn, he can teach the language...why is it that someone who's not French speaking can learn and teach French...and people pass very well and speak French very well. How come *sifuna ukuba* (do we want to be) different from other languages. If results are bad you must ask the teacher why you have poor results.

R: But isn't that they are accountable more to government than parents?

Mr Miya: That's why even at school we asked the principal how come we are poor performing school. That's what we asked him...why we are poor performing school.

R: And what did he say?

Mr Miya: Because we are not teachers...you went to school and you studied and you passed. And now you are principal and others are HOD and all that.

R: What was his response?

Mr Miya: His response was at that time, we asked...was that that he's new in the school. Of course he was new at the moment so he doesn't

know what is happening. Let's just give him a year or two. So fine a year or two *idlulile* (has passed). It's been 4 years now. *Sabuza futhi, Mineer* (we asked again, Sir) we are still considered a poor performing school so his reasoning was to say that parents are not involved. They treat the school as a drop zone. They don't want to participate when there are meetings. Parents don't get involved. OK *Mineer*, (Sir) parents...parents...but parents don't teach for the rest of the day. Teachers are the ones that teach *uya andastenda* (do you understand?). What is it? Do your teachers communicate with you and if they do communicate, what seems to be the problem because they seem to be a problem somewhere? If we are considered a poor performing school. If we are a poor performing school it means the same children from grade 4 to Grade 7 are still going to be poor at high school. And that high school will also be considered a poor performing high school because it has accepted poor performing students, *uyayibona lento* (do you see that?). If you are poor from here and you go to the next grade, what's going to change? Nothing...nothing because the mentality is still the same...parents...you can't blame them because parents they don't have the methods of teaching. Parents are just parents. They don't know what happens in the classroom. They can motivate...my child do homework...study...but what was taught there the parent was not there.

R: So what did you do?

Mr Miya: So we said, Sir, unless there's a problem with a method of teaching between the teachers...some of the teachers commented...we said we are not judging. There's one thing you must understand. We do not know how to teach. I don't even have ambitions of being a teacher. I don't wish to be a teacher but I want my child to be taught in a right way. As much as your children are taught in a right way in a multi-racial school so why don't you teach the same way? The same method that are being taught where your children are attending school...why don't you use them here?

R: Do you think they know them?

Mr Miya: Because at the end of day all of you guys are all teachers. They are teachers and you are teachers...so you want to tell me that the one teaching your child is better than you? Why must the one teaching your child be better than you? You must be jealous that I want to be better than the one who is teaching my child so that the one teaching your child may say hey you, why don't you go and go to the school where your mother is teaching because they are producing better results than we do here?

R: Isn't it that the teachers complain that the classes are too big?

Mr Miya: *Hai maan...hai maan...mamela* (No, man....no man...listen)...it's an issue but *mara kusukela kudala abantu abamnyama singena eklasini e-overcrowded enabantwana abadlula hundred* (even long back black people attended school in overcrowded

classrooms with over a hundred learners). This is not new. I said it even before *ndathi mara nathi besingena eklasini...ufuna ukuthini...* (even us we used to be in those classes...what do you want to say?)...we were used to it...*besingena eklasini siku mo 100 to 150* (we were 100 to 150 in class) but teachers could produce results within those classrooms.

R: But isn't the problem that the curriculum has too many activities to an extent that teachers can't even mark them effectively?

Mr Miya: Then it means whoever is dealing with the curriculum must be mad. They know it's not working. Why are they continuing with something that isn't working?

R: Thank you so much for your enlightening thoughts. I really gained a lot from this discussion.

Mr Miya: You are welcome any time Mr Sibanda.

4. Classroom observations

Listening and speaking lesson: Poster work-Ms Hamba (12 March 2013)

My second stop after visiting Ms Dube is Ms Hamba's class. I find her in another teacher's classroom. On seeing me knocking at her classroom door, she hastily rushes to greet me. In one hand she's holding a chart that she is going to use in her lesson. Ms Hamba is an elderly teacher. She walks with a slight limp, a symptom of having seen better days in the teaching profession.

Ms Hamba: Morning Mr Sibanda. You came at the wrong time but I managed to arrange a lesson for you. You can come in.

I follow her into her classroom, which is a temporary made up of asbestos structure. Unlike Ms Dube's class, Ms Hamba has so many learners that I estimate to be more than 50.

Ms Hamba: Class Mr Sibanda is going to be with us....no what?

Class2: Noise!

Ms Hamba: Good...let's begin...

She struggles to put up the chart on the wall as it keeps falling off. The learners suppress a laugh as she gives them a reprimanding look each time the chart falls off. I get up and help her put it up, much to her relief.

Ms Hamba: Let us look at the picture. We are going to describe what we see. The boy is staring at the TV screen with his father. The boy kneels next to the TV. Do you know what is to kneel?

Students' hands 'shoot up' as they are eager to give an answer.

Ms Hamba: Can you come and show me how to kneel?

A student volunteers and comes to the front to demonstrate how to kneel.

Ms Hamba: When we kneel what do we use?

Class2: Kneel!

Ms Hamba: No, knees.

Ms Hamba: The boy is wearing his school uniform. Who is wearing his school uniform?

Class2: The boy is wearing his school uniform.

Ms Hamba: What is the colour of our school uniform?

Class2: Blue!

Ms Hamba: And?

Class2: Gold!

Ms Hamba: Why do we wear a school uniform?

Mashudu: To be smart.

Ms Hamba: And?

Learn2: To look beautiful.

Ms Hamba: And?

Mashudu: So that other people knows we belong to this school.

Ms Hamba: Good. Now, I will continue. Dad is reading the newspaper. Who is reading the newspaper?

Class2: Dad is reading the reading the newspaper.

Ms Hamba: The boy is looking at the TV. What is happening in the TV?

Class2: Burning house.

Ms Hamba: You must learn to answer in...?

Class2: Full!

Ms Hamba: Who can tell me the colour of the uniform?

Learn4: Green and blue.

Ms Hamba: Dad reads the newspaper with his son. 'His' is different form 'her'. 'Her' we use it for...?

Learn5: Mother.

Ms Hamba: And?

Learn2: Girl.

Ms Hamba: Good. 'His' we use it for...?

Class2: Boy!

Ms Hamba: 'Her' we use it for...?

Class2: Female!

Ms Hamba: We must answer in...?

Class2: Full!

Ms Hamba: Who looks at the TV with his father?

Class2: The boy is looking at the TV with his father.

Ms Hamba: At what does the boy points?

Learn6: The boy points at fire.

Ms Hamba: What do you do when you see something burning?

Mashudu: I scream.

Learn2: I try to call fire fighter.

Ms Hamba: Can you tell me. What are fire fighters?

Students are quiet, unsure of the answer. The teacher probes further.

Ms Hamba: Do you remember we talked about fire fighters in Life Skills.

Learn7: The fire fighter is the people who put the fire out. *The teacher reverts to the subject of the school uniform.*

Ms Hamba: Who is wearing his school uniform?

Class2: The boy is wearing his school uniform.

Ms Hamba: If you listen attentively you will be able to answer in full. What does dad read with his son?
 Learn8: Dad his son...*Class laughs loudly.*
 Learn2: Dad read newspaper with her son.
 Ms Hamba: Her son?
 Class2: His son!
 Ms Hamba: What is dad doing?
 Class2: Dad is reading the newspaper with his son.
 Ms Hamba: What does the boy look at?
 Class2: The boy look at TV with the house burning.
 Ms Hamba: Before you reach the burning house what do you see?
 Class2: Smoke!
 Ms Hamba: Good. Remember to call adults when you see fire, *neh?*

Listening and comprehension: Ms Tafane (12 March 2013)

Mr Ms Tafane is one of those teachers who don't worry much about her surroundings. Her classroom is different from others. She does not stand when teaching but prefers the comfort of her desk and chair. I'd tried on several previous occasions to secure an appointment for a lesson observation all without success. I am lucky this time as she has allowed me to come and observe her teaching.

Ms Tafane: I'm going to read you a story before I give you questions...Are you listening John! Noluthando? Tshepo, *O mametsi?* (Are you listening?) Listen! Comprehension. What is comprehension?
 Tshepo: Comprehend
 Ms Tafane: Comprehend! No. Comprehension?
 Phendu: Comprehension is a story.
 Ms Tafane: What do we mean by saying comprehension? If you find in the test a heading like 'Section A: Comprehension'. What does it mean?
 Lern10: The test....
 Ms Tafane: No, it means you are going to read for understanding...to comprehend.
 Phendu: Comprehension.
 Ms Tafane: *Ka Setswana ibitiwa kubalelwa ka kuklwitso.* (In SeTswana it's called reading for understanding). *O fewa* story. (You are given a story). After reading you answer the question to show that you understanding.
 Ms Tafane: Hmm...comprehension....*o lekhowa*...such a big word...*o rutekile.* Can we all say 'comprehension'?
 Class5: Comprehension!
 Ms Tafane: So are you ready to comprehend?
 Class5: Yes!
 Ms Tafane: Teacher is going to read for you and you are going to listen. You are going to do what?
 Class5: Listen!

Ms Tafane: And after listening, you are going to do what?
Class5: Answer questions!
Ms Tafane: Are you listening now because I'm going to start now?
Class5: Yes, ma'am!
Ms Tafane: "One day two tiny grey mice were watching a huge strong lion sleeping in the sun. 'Run over his nose', said one mice 'and see if he wakes up.'" Do you hear what they're saying, two tiny mice? *Intho e huge ke e big neh* (Something huge is something very very big, isn't it). I will continue, "And one says run over his nose and see if he wakes up".

(Class laughs)

Ms Tafane: Hey, Nkululeko, stop fighting for something that is not useful...you can't wait for me to finish the story so that you can look for your plastic container... *(Reprimanding a learner)*. *Ehe*, now I'm continuing... "so the silly mouse ran over the lion's nose"...*e kaye thupa ela...where's that stick bathong?* *(Getting irritated by the learners disrupting the lesson)*... "so the silly little mouse ran over the lion's nose"... and what happened? "Of course the lion woke and caught the mouse in his big paw". What would you do?

L4: I will scream.

Ms Tafane: Scream for what? Isn't it you are a silly little mouse and you wanted to see what the lion will do? "The huge lion was upset and was going to eat the small mouse. 'Oh, please don't eat me' begged the small mouse. 'Please don't eat me. One day I will help you. The lion laughed, 'ha ha ha...you are too small to help me. You are too small to help anyone little mouse. You can't help me'. He was not real hungry so the lion let the mouse go. Sooner after that the lion was running in the veldt. Suddenly, he ran into a trap that the hunters had made to catch the buck. It was a net and the lion was caught fast. He couldn't move but roared 'grrrrr...ho ho ho hooo...help help', he roared. 'Save me from this trap'. The buck walked by, 'I won't help you' said the buck. 'Last week you ate my brother. I won't help you'. A rabbit walked by, 'I won't help you too', said the rabbit. 'Last week you ate you ate my mother'". So how bad is lion? He ate the buck's brother and he also ate rabbit's mother. "So the little grey mouse came by. 'You didn't eat me last week. I will help you'". Remember what the lion said. You remember that?

Class5: Yes!

Ms Tafane: And now the mouse is the one that is going to help who?

Class5: The lion!

Ms Tafane: *Ehe...* "The little grey mouse chewed at the net"...*e etsang...ke bone gore meno a lona a lekana le a peba?* (Doing what...let me see if your teeth are as big as mice's?) *(Joking with the class)*.

(All learners grin, showing their teeth)

Ms Tafane: *Yoh*, you all have very big teeth. That means there's no little mouse in this class but only the lions *(laughing)*. OK listen. "The mouse was chewing the net. He chewed and chewed. Late in the

afternoon the hole was big enough for the lion to climb out. 'Thank you little friend. Now I know that little animals can help big animals like me', said who?

Class5: Lion!

Ms Tafane: Why?

Learn5: The lions are not always strong.

Ms Tafane: The lions are not always strong. So what do we learn from this story between lion and mouse? What do we learn? Masha?

Masha: Even if she is little, she can't eat me.

Ms Tafane: Who is little? She's pointing at you and is saying you are a she...are you a she? Boy or girl?

Dudu: My baby brother, when he like to say he to a boy he says she.

Ms Tafane: So what do we learn from the story? Thandi!

Thandi: I learn to... I must help others.

Ms Tafane: Thandi.

Thandi: I learn that even little things can help others

Peter: I learn that I must not eat others (Class laughs)

Tim: Are an animal? (Whole class laughs)

Ms Tafane: Stop that you two. Ok. The most important thing is to learn to help each other. That's what help each other whether you are like Thato and like beating others, they will be day you will need their help. One day you will have to write a test and you don't have a pen. You have to go and borrow to that tiny tiny little girl who you always insult...who you always call her by silly names. Like saying other people they have a head like a stoke sweet. One day you will need their help and they will say 'no how can you borrow a pen from a stoke sweet. So you have to learn to help and respect each other. So the first question is 'What is the best title for the story that?' The best best title for the story that we have read. What is it?

Thandi: The lion and the mouse.

Ms Tafane: The lion and the....?

Class5: Mouse!

Ms Tafane: And *wena* (you) what do you want to say? (*Pointing at another learner*)

Pitso: Big lion and tiny mouse.

Ms Tafane: Big lion and tiny mouse? Neo?

Neo: The little tiny mice

Ms Tafane: Ok. There's someone who said 'The lion and the...?'

Class5: Mouse!

Ms Tafane: Who said that?

Class5: Kabelo!

Ms Tafane: Let's clap hands for him (*class claps*)

Ms Tafane: Who is the main character in the story? Who is the main main character who appear several times in the story? Lihle!

Lihle: Lion.

Ms Tafane: *O mongwe hape!* (Another one again)

Queen: Mouse

Mark: Rabbit

Ms Tafane: Lion is our correct answer. Where does our story take place?
Where?

Nom: Farm.

Lihle: Jungle!

Pitso: Zoo!

Ms Tafane: Let's listen again...let's listen again. "One day two tiny grey mice were watching a huge lion sleeping in the veldt...." Where did the story take place?

Class5: In the veldt!

Ms Tafane: Good! The second question is "How did the lion escape from the trap? Nothando!

Notha: By the hole the mouse had made.

Ken: Tiny mouse help

Ms Tafane: How did tiny mouse help?

Ken: By eating the net

Ms Tafane: He eat? You eat and swallow a net? Yes John.

John: The little mouse bite the mouse (whole class burst in laughter)

Ms Tafane: *Yoh lona* what did you eat this morning!

Class5: Teacher! Teacher! Teacher!

Ms Tafane: Yes Tami!

Tami: The little mouse helped by biting the net.

Ms Tafane: Noooo! Yes, Neo!

Neo: The little mouse helped by chewing...

Ms Tafane: Chewing the net. It chewed and chewed. Let's go back to the story. Let's listen. "The little mouse chewed the net..." So Neo is correct. Our answer is 'the mouse chewed the rope and set the lion free. The answers are here. You have to circle the right one. Tell if the statement is true or false. "The lion needed help from the mouse'. Is it true or false?

Class5: True!

Ms Tafane: Give a reason for your answer. How did the lion need help? How did the lion need help from the mouse?

Phendu: The lion was trapped!

Ms Tafane: You have to give a reason.

Ms Tafane: Answer *ya gago e tswarisa* flue... (Your answer gives me a flu). The lion was trapped in the net. Answer the following questions. 'What did the grey mouse do to wake the lion up?' this grey mouse, the naughty one. What did they do to wake the lion up?

Paul: Mouse was going

Ms Tafane: *Yoh lona!* (Yoh you) Yes, Phendu!

Phendu: The lion was walking on the inside nose.

Neo: The mouse ran over the lion's nose.

8. Home visits to learners homes

Visit to Lindi's home (14 July 2013)

It is a Friday morning and the researcher just arrived at Mavimbela home. It is a hectic day as Lindi's gran has to submit her pension forms and her 2 year old sister has to go to the clinic for her immunization.

- Gogo: *Molo tisha.* [Greetings, teacher].
R: *Ewe gogo, ninjani?*
[Greetings Granny, how are you?].
Gogo: *Ndisaphilile ngane yam, ndingazi kuwe.*
[I'm fine thank you, my son and how are you?]
R: *Nami ndisaphilile makhulu. Akukho nto. Iphi'ntombi yami?*
[I am also well gran. Where is my girl?]
Gogo: *Ikhona apha endlini. Wee ngane nangu utisha wenu usefikile.*
[She's here in the house. Hey child! (Calling). Your teacher is here]. (Referring to the researcher).
Lindi: *Ndivasa uNono. Andithi uyahamba naye eklinika.*
[I'm bathing Nono. Isn't it she is going to the clinic too?]
Gogo: *Tixo wami. Besendikhohliwe. Khawulezani nami ndiyakuhambisa izi-formu zami zepentsheni.*
[Oh my God, I'd forgotten. Hurry up, I will also submit my pension forms].
Lindi: *Kanti eMs Zungu izifomu zegrant uzihambisa nini?*
[In fact when are you submitting our grant forms?]
(emphatically reminds her gran).
Gogo: *Zizawumela umalume wakho azigcwalise.*
[We will wait for your uncle to complete them].
Lindi: *Kodwa makhulu ama-birth ethu akhona nje. Uzakubhala i-ID Ms Zungu qha!*
[But gran, our birth certificates are there. You will only write our ID numbers only].
Gogo: *Nawe Lindi musukundenza isibhanxa mna. Zininzi into abazifunayo. Andinayo imali yokwehla ndenyuka mna. Uyazi leza ntombazana zasemawovisi ukuthi zichwensa kanjani uma ndingazigcwalisanga kakuhle. Bazovese bandiphonsele zona.*
[You Lindi, don't make me a fool. There's a lot of information that they need. I've no money to be travelling up and down. You know how arrogant those girls who work in the offices are. They will just throw the forms at me if they are not filled out properly].
Lindi: *Manje makhulu uzosithengela ngani impahla ze-Christmas? Mina ndifuna i-skinny jean noNono ufuna i-tight.*
[So gran, how are you going to buy us Christmas clothes? I want a skinny jean and Nono wants a tight].
Gogo: *Unina kaBabo wayethe uzonithengela bazukulu bami.*
[Babo's mum said she would buy you my grandchildren].
(Consoling her).

Visit to Thandi's home (16 September 2013)

After phoning Thandi's guardian, she informs me that she is not at home but her sister is at home with Thando. She gives me her sister's cell-phone number so that I can arrange to visit. I call her and she gives me directions. On my arrival, I find the beautiful little Thando eagerly waiting for me. She timidly meets me at the gate and keeps on saying, "I'm so nervous". I assure her that she mustn't be nervous since I had promised to visit her at her home. As I get into her house, I am met by another girl aged about 12 years old, who introduces herself as Thando's cousin, Mpho. She is in Grade 5. I ask them where an adult is. Mpho indicates that an adult present is her mother who is having a bath. Her aunt quickly comes out and kindly greets me. I quickly introduce myself to her and identify myself with my ID book and student card. She asks if she can sit and I say she can continue with her chores as I will be fine with Thandi.

I start off by asking Thandi if she passed the previous term and she dashes off to fetch her progress report which she proudly shows me. I congratulate her on her sterling performance. I also ask her to bring her books which I use to probe her. Mpho sits across beaming in excitement as if reassuring her cousin. I casually ask Mpho what she wants to be when she grows up. She indicates that she wants to be a fashion designer. I ask Thando the same question and she indicates that she also wants to be fashion designer. I ask both of them what a fashion designer does, surprisingly they both do not have a clue. They indicate that they only hear on television that a fashion designer makes a lot of money. I explain to them that fashion designers study fashion trends and design their own fashions which they exhibits at fashion shows. They both get excited that the career entails a lot of travelling overseas or other African countries.

- R: What is your favourite subject?
Thandi: English is my favourite because it is easier than Setswana.
R: Oh! OK, really?
Thando: Yes, I speak Xhosa at home but at school I learn Setswana.
Mpho: I do Xhosa but Thando does not do it because there was no Xhosa when she started grade 1.

[Thando brings her homework book and I page through it and come across an interview exercise]

- R: What did you do in this exercise?
Thandi: Teacher ask us to interview someone.
R: Oh, so who did you interview?
Thandi: I interviewed my mother's twin sister
R: What did you learn from the interview?
Thandi: I learnt what she likes and what she does not like.
R: What is this speaking list?
Thandi: Teacher writes it on board and we learn it and make sentences.

[I ask her to read the words and she reads and explains in English].

- R: Can you read me these sentences?
Thandi: Granny says uncle is going to slaughter a cow.

R: That's good. What is to slaughter?
 Thandi: I don't know. Teacher look at my Life Skills book (she changes the subject and proudly flips the pages)
 R: Wow, that's nice...what do you learn in Life Skills? (Asking curiously)
 Thandi: We learn how to protect our self...like if you are in a taxi and you eat something. You don't throw it out. You gonna disturb others.
 R: That's great...can you explain why you matched 'rain' with 'people' in this exercise
 Thandi: Rain gets into their houses and their blankets get wet.
 R: Oh I see... what is silt?
 Thandi: It is salt.
 R: Oh, I see. In this exercise you drew some symbols. What do they mean?
 Thandi: These are churches. I am a Christian.
 R: What does Hindu mean?
 Thandi: Hindu means they talk other languages not Christian.
 R: Here you did an exercise on 'Animals that help us'
 Thandi: Yes, we get milk from cow and eat it.
 R: Do we eat or drink milk.
 Thandi: Teacher say we must say eat or use.
 R: Oh, I see. And you did this exercise 'Say whether it's a statement or question or command'. What is a command?
 Thandi: I think it is to force.
 R: Blind? What does blind mean?
 Thandi: In the story it said 'blind' ...I don't know.
 R: OK. Blind means unable to see like other people. And the word 'mind'?
 Thandi: It is in his head.
 R: 'kind'
 Thandi: It's me (*she giggles shyly*)
 R: I see you did an exercise on 'prefixes'. What is a prefix?
 Thandi: It means to add in front.
 R: Why do we add in front?
 Thandi: We add to form opposite.
 R: Hmm...not always...repaint...does it mean to remove paint.
 Thandi: I don't know (*she laughs*)
 R: OK. My girl. It was nice talking to you...you are so clever. I will visit again to see what you do when you play with your friends...who are your friends?
 Thandi: Mandy, Thuli, Mrs Miya...
 R: OK...I will come again and see what you do with them...I also want to learn your games.
 Thandi: Yes teacher come tomorrow...
 R: I will phone your aunt when I come *neh*...thank you very much.
 Bye.

I thank Thandi's aunt and leave.

9. Children at play

Thandi playing with her friends (25 September 2013)

After my first visit to Thandi, I schedule another visit. Her aunt eagerly accepts my request. I choose to visit in the afternoon. It is around 3pm when I arrive at Thandi's house. She sees me at the gate and rushes to open it.

- R: Hello Thandi!
Thandi: Hello teacher. My aunt told me you were coming today. *(excitedly)*
R: Yes I called her. What were you doing?
Thandi: I'm playing with my friends.
R: Wow...that's great. May I come and see how you play?
Thandi: Yes you can. This is my friends...Mandy, Thandi and Tshidi.
R: Oh it's another Thandi! *(Jokingly)*. *(Both children and researcher laugh)*
R: Hello girls!
Girls: Hello Sir!
R: I'm Mr Sibanda from UJ. I would like to see how you play with your friends. Please don't mind me. I will not look *(jokingly)*. *(They all laugh)*
Mrs Miya: But I see Sir, at our school that day.
Mandy: Me too...you walk with Madam Ms Dube.
R: You are such clever girls! *(Praising them)*
Thandi: Yes my mum say we must not talk to strangers.
R: Oh really...that's good. So am I a stranger
Girls: No! *(They all laugh)*
R: OK girls you can continue playing while I go to the bathroom. When I come back please don't mind my presence. Just continue playing.
I quickly leave in order to make them relax. When I come back I just sit in a corner behind the wall. They don't actually see me although they know I'm there.
Thandi: *Wena Tshidi uya-cheater. Uhlala uba-first. Tshidi you're cheating. You're always the first.*
Mrs Miya: I started first. *Mina nginguNoluntu. Indoda yami ngu Phenyo* (I'm Noluntu and my husband is Phenyo).
Mandy: *Mina nginguMawande umama kaNoluntu.* (I'm Mawande, Noluntu's mother).
Thandi: *But uPhenyo uyabora. U-cheater u-Dineo ngo Noluntu.* (But Phenyo is boring. He cheats Dineo with Noluntu).
Mrs Miya: Umama wami akafuni siyibheke i-Generations. Uthi eyabantu abadala!
Mandy: *Mina ngiyibuka uma umama wami engekho. Ugogo aka-mayindi!* I watch it if my mother is not around. My grandmother doesn't mind!
Thandi: Asidlaleni iskolo. Mina ngingu-Principal!
Mandy: I'm teacher and *wena* (you) Mrs Miya you're a parent!

Thandi: *Yah ungumama kaThemba lowo o-naughty!* You're the naughty Themba's mother! (They all laugh).
Thandi: Your child doesn't do homework, why?
Mandy: He play a lot principal with his friend. They play play-station whole day.
Mrs Miya: He disturb my class and not listen. Does not write spelling!
Thandi: He must get detention!

