

**THE FACILITATIVE ROLE OF GRADE 1 TEACHERS IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS IN SESOTHO**

by

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Thesis

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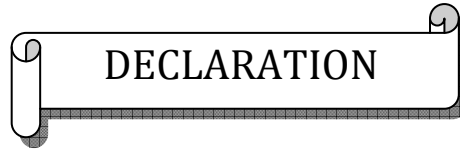
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DECLARATION

I, Mamosebatho Julia Ramabenyane, declare that the field study hereby submitted for the degree in Philosophiae Doctor degree in the Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, is my own independent work, and that I have not previously, either as a whole or in part, submitted this work for a qualification at another University or at another faculty at this university. I also hereby cede copyright of this work to the University of the Free State.

Signature

Date

M. J. RAMABENYANE



DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Adelice Mpho Tsukulu, my late brother Leonard Hlalefo Tsukulu and my late father-in-law David Nkhabu Ramabenyane.

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I humbly thank God for His divine love, mercy and protection that sustained me during this study and my ancestors for their accompaniment throughout this academic journey of my life.

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SUMMARY

The study explores the facilitative role of the Grade 1 teachers in the development of reading skills in Sesotho in some Mangaung schools. Since the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) report of 2006 and those of the Systemic Evaluations of 2003 and 2007 revealed that South African learners perform poorly in reading it has become a cause for concern to all. Being a Mosotho by birth, with a personal interest in the development of Sesotho, and also being involved in the teaching of Sesotho at the University of the Free State in the Faculty of Education, School of Social Sciences and Language Education, I became concerned that Sesotho-speaking learners' performance was the poorest in comparison with other African language speaking learners. My concern was intensified by reports that South African teachers were dissatisfied with their profession and experiencing low morale. This phenomenon evoked my interest in how Grade 1 teachers were facilitating the development of their learners' reading skills in Sesotho, and motivated me to determine if there was a need to intervene and how the teachers and I would do it. I therefore formulated the research question as follows: "How can I assist the Grade 1 teachers in some Mangaung schools to improve their facilitation of the development of reading skills in Sesotho?"

My study is qualitative in nature and is based on Kemmis and McTaggart's model of spiral of action research cycles, which I adapted to suit the contexts of the participants. Since the study involved improving and changing the disempowering conditions which hamper the teachers' effectiveness in facilitating the development of reading skills, I approached the study within a constructivist paradigm. As teachers began to construct meaning of their facilitative role in the development of reading skills they made significant inputs into the formulation of the guidelines which they adopted as their own and were eager to implement.

Thirteen Grade 1 teachers participated in the in-depth situation analysis of the study and only seven in the intervention. Having considered ethical issues, the participants were interviewed, observed in their classrooms and assessed on how they presented reading lessons to demonstrate their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. Data was analysed inductively allowing for categories and themes to emerge.

New insights emerging from the in-depth situation analysis informed how the intervention took place.

Since the seven Grade 1 teachers participated in the study as co-researchers, they made inputs in developing the cycles of the action research. Cycle 1 of the intervention was undertaken in the form of an awareness workshop entitled “Empowering teachers: working with the head, heart and hands”. The main objective was to assist teachers to understand better some issues pertaining to their facilitative role. The findings of this cycle showed that in providing assistance and guidance to the teachers, they improved their understanding of the progression from Curriculum 2005 to the National Curriculum Statement and the Foundations for Learning Campaign, of reading policy documents, of the concept reading and the reading process, of their facilitative role, and of integrating components of lesson planning. Their level of motivation and confidence improved after the workshop, which further motivated them to become change agents and to improve their facilitative role by participating in the intervention. The Grade 1 teachers and I therefore proceeded to Cycle 2 in which the teachers were continually assisted to implement the guidelines in Spiral Cycle 1, improved the implementation of the guidelines in Spiral Cycle 2 and assessed the implementation of the guidelines in Spiral Cycle 3.

The findings of the intervention show that teachers were motivated and gained confidence in having improved their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. They attached value to the collaboration established among themselves, their colleagues from the school they partnered with in my study and between some of the lecturers at the UFS. They have deepened the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes from participating in the study pertaining to their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. Most importantly, they have become aware that they can resolve their own problems by planning, acting, observing and reflecting on their practice. They understand that improving their facilitative role is an ongoing process which can be made easier if they have the necessary resources such as reading books and that they are continuously supported and motivated to commit to their practice.



KEY CONCEPTS

Action research

Action research cycles

Action research spiral cycles

Assessment Standards

Facilitation

Facilitative role

Grade 1 teachers

Guidelines

Outcomes

Reading

Reading approaches

Reading processes

Reading programmes

Reading skills

Reading strategies

Sesotho Home Language

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AS	Assessment Standard
BTL	Breakthrough to Literacy
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CO	Critical Outcome
DoE	Department of Education
FfLC	Foundations for Learning Campaign
FP	Foundation Phase
GL	Guidelines
HL	Home Language
HoD	Head of Department
LO	Learning Outcome
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Survey
SMT	School Management Team
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The birth of democracy in South Africa, after the 1994 elections, brought many significant changes to the education system, one of which was the recognition of Sesotho as one of the eleven official languages spoken and used as a language of education in South Africa (Republic of South Africa (RSA) Constitution, 1996; Department of Education (DoE), 2002a:6-8; 2002b:4). Since the researcher in this study is a Mosotho by birth with Sesotho as the mother tongue, there is personal interest in the new status of Sesotho as a Home Language (HL) and Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). As a qualified Primary Education teacher and currently responsible for lecturing Sesotho Subject Didactics modules at the University of the Free State in the Faculty of Education, the researcher is interested in the development of Sesotho as an official language and concerned about how it influences the teaching and learning of Sesotho as a subject presented at Home Language level and used as the LoLT in the Foundation Phase. The implication is that the researcher was driven by personal interest to identify the research problem investigated in this study (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006:19).

As a result of changes to the education system, the Sesotho mother tongue speaking teachers at the Foundation Phase experienced a major paradigm shift, away from old teaching and learning practices to new ones that reflect quality, equity, equality, non-racialism and non-sexism (DoE, 2002a:7). They were expected to counter the influence of a traditional, teacher-centred philosophy of teaching and learning that focused mainly on what the school provided to the learners rather than on learners demonstrating their knowledge, skills and attitudes as specified by outcomes. Consequent to the implementation of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) in 1998, underpinned by an Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), the teaching and learning of Sesotho had to be aligned with the philosophy and principles of OBE system that regards the process of teaching and learning as important as the content being taught. This system is characterised by the creation of a curriculum framework that outlines

specific, measurable outcomes, a commitment not only to providing an opportunity for education but also achieving learning outcomes for advancement. Assessment determines whether learners have achieved a minimum standard (Bertram, 2008:5-6; DoE, 2002a:10-11; Jansen & Taylor, 2003:37).

In accordance with the philosophy and principles of OBE, Sesotho Home Language speaking teachers were to ensure that their Sesotho speaking learners became the focus of the teaching and learning environments. In teaching Sesotho, the teachers were expected to equip the learners with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to think creatively and critically, to solve problems, to collect, organise and analyse data, to work together with other people as well as independently, to communicate effectively, and to make responsible decisions (DoE, 2002a:11; Jansen & Taylor, 2003:37). As a result, the role of the teacher changed from merely transmitting knowledge to passive learners, to facilitating and guiding learning activities and encouraging learners to take greater responsibility for their own learning. According to the DoE, the teachers' role was to mediate learning, interpret and design learning programmes and materials and become specialists in their learning areas (DoE, 2002a:9).

Sesotho, like any other language, is fundamental to the total development of a human being, and is used for communication and for many other purposes (DoE, 2002b:5; Harris & Smith, 1972:69; Hennessy, 2009:1; Van Vuuren, 1976:305). The teacher and learner relationship is realised through their interactions as they use Sesotho to communicate their objectives, goals and ideals. The teaching and learning of Sesotho has to equip learners with the four basic language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing in an integrated way. These skills are supposed to enable them to communicate effectively, involving the simultaneous manifestation of the language system in use. This implies that the Sesotho speaking learner was expected to be able to demonstrate her/his knowledge of linguistic rules and the ability to use them for effective communication (Widdowson, 1983:3 & 57).

The DoE (2002a:20-21; 2002b:6-7) formulated the four basic language skills as the first four learning outcomes, namely, *Listening* (LO 1), *Speaking* (LO 2), *Reading* and *Viewing* (LO 3), and *Writing* (LO 4). The last two of the six learning outcomes are

Thinking and Reasoning (LO 5), and *Language Structure and Use* (LO 6). These outcomes were formulated in such a way that they gave specific focus to particular kinds of knowledge and skills, so that they were clear and understandable. LO 3 stated: "The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional value in texts". Since LO 3 focuses on reading and viewing, it has relevance to the title of this study which addresses the facilitative role of the Grade 1 teachers in the development of reading skills.

Since the implementation of Curriculum 2005 in 1998, the Grade 1 teachers teaching Sesotho as HL and using it as the LoTL had experienced many problems (Jantjies, 2009:2; Ramabenyane, 2000), with most unready for the undertaking (Lessing & De Witt, 2007:53). A survey conducted by De Witt and Lessing (2002:273-288) indicated that teachers facilitating reading in the Foundation Phase needed further training. As a result of confusion and teacher unpreparedness for its implementation, C2005 was severely criticised and had to be reviewed in 2000 to make it user-friendly and understandable, while maintaining the principles of OBE (Bertram, 2008:6-7; Curriculum Review Committee, 2000; DoE, 2002a:5-6; Jansen & Taylor, 2003:38). The revised version, known as the Revised National Curriculum Statement was revised in 2002 for implementation in 2004 in the Foundation Phase and was later adopted as the National Curriculum Statement. However, the NCS did not seem to have improved the teaching and learning of Sesotho.

The problems with regard to the implementation of the NCS continued unabated (Bertram, 2008:8-9; Jansen & Taylor, 2003:39-41). The Minister of Basic Education, Minister Angela Motshekga, responded to the criticism and complaints about the implementation of the NCS by appointing a panel of experts to investigate it. Mandated to make recommendations for improving the implementation of the NCS, the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement* compiled a report based on their findings which outlined several recommendations. The Task Team (DoE, 2009:7-8) recommended the development of "one *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* document for every learning area and subject (by phase), that will be the definitive support for all teachers and help address the complexities and confusion created by curriculum and assessment

policy vagueness and lack of specification, document proliferation and misinterpretation". The suggested date for implementation was January 2011. This recommendation led to the production of the *National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades R-12* which comprises the following documents: the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for all approved subjects, the *National Policy* pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the *NCS Grades R-12* and the National Protocol for Assessment Grades R-12 (DoBE, 2011a:3; DoBE, 2011b:3). CAPS was not yet implemented at the beginning of this study, an overview of its implementation is done in Chapter 4 (4.2.4).

A major problem experienced in the teaching and learning of Sesotho was that Sesotho speaking learners at the Foundation Phase were unable to read properly (Van Staden & Howie, 2008). According to the Systemic Evaluations Reports (Challis, 2007; DoE, 2003c; Khumalo, 2008a; Khumalo, 2008b) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 International Report (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy, 2007), the problem of learners' poor performance in reading affected all Foundation Phase learners, including those using the other official languages.

The learners' poor performance in reading raised concern about the need to facilitate the development of reading skills effectively. Reading, as a process, is a very complex activity requiring different skills (Chapter 2:2.2.1; 2.2.2; 2.2.4), and as one of the four basic language skills is indispensable in enriching the learners' ability to learn in and out of school. When Grade 1 Sesotho speaking teachers facilitate the development of the reading skill they must ensure that it occurs in an integrated way, while simultaneously ensuring that the development of reading sub-skills takes place (Chapters 2:2.2.4; 4:4.6).

The Grade 1 teachers have a great responsibility for developing the learners' reading skills by bridging the gap between the spoken language which children have already mastered from home and the written one. In so doing they need to take into cognisance that as learners interact with the printed messages their cultural backgrounds, values and attitudes help them to attach meaning to the printed word (Harris & Smith, 1986:23; Kelly, 2008:3). They assist the learners to think

intelligently, process information efficiently, improve their social conditions and function effectively and efficiently in complex technological societies (Flanagan, 1995:6; Wessels, 2010:98-99). In acquiring the reading skills, the learners enhance their personal development and social progress. The development of reading skills is and has always been a concern of all teachers even as early as in the forties and beyond. Reading, as a means of learning, facilitates acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for personal and social advancement and it has always been inextricably linked with work, recreation and all human activities (Gates, 1949:7-8; Safford, 2008:21; Wessels, 2010:98). According to Russell (1949:25-26), children who are able to read enjoy some benefits of reading for escape, for temporary diversion, organising influence on personality and for instrumental effects. Developing children's reading skills helps them to meet physical, instrumental and personal-social needs. READ Educational Trust (2004a:10) and Jantjies (2009:8) in the 21st century, echo the sentiments by Russell in maintaining that learners, who master reading skills, become literate, function better in society, have better jobs, have a broader knowledge of the world, can reason abstractly, can acquire knowledge more easily and can achieve academic success easily.

In facilitating the development of reading skills, Grade 1 teachers are expected to start from the premise that reading comprises two components. The first allows the language to be recognised by means of graphic representation, the second allows language to be comprehended. As they facilitate the development of reading skills they must equip learners with the skills to turn the collection of symbols (letters) which they see on paper into communication (sounds), as one of the processes crucial in understanding the written message (Hunter-Grundin, 1979:1-2; McInnis, as cited in Clark, 1985:7, 19; Wessels, 2010:40-47). In other words, Sesotho HL speaking learners must be assisted to acquire the skills to differentiate the symbols used in the writing system of their language as well as to interpret those symbols they have previously identified to derive from them the message they were intended to convey (Staiger, 1973:23; Washtell, 2008a:32). In addition, teachers must show learners how to interpret graphic symbols written on the page, how to interpret the experience, how to show a critical understanding of what has been written and how to apply those ideas expressed in texts to their life worlds (Carrilo, 1976:2; Dechant, 1982:3; Flanagan, 1995: 2-3; Harris & Smith, 1986:4-5; Hennessy, 2009:2; Wessels,

2010:34). In essence, teachers must make learners aware that reading involves several processes, namely, decoding, making sense and active participation (Cox, as cited in Kelly, 2008:3).

In facilitating the development of reading skills in Sesotho, it seems obligatory for teachers to consciously help learners to increase their vocabulary and structural knowledge of the language the learners have already acquired (Wessels, 2010:7). It seems also important that Grade 1 teachers continually enhance the level of cognitive development of their learners to enable them to deal with the ideas presented in the text when they read. As they facilitate the development of reading skills, the Grade 1 teachers acquaint their learners with the reading process by holding or playing with books, listening to other learners telling stories, noticing print around them and listening to the teachers who talk about books. In so doing they assist their learners to construct meaning from the pictures in the books by listening to what the teacher is reading and becoming aware of letters, syllables and words (Zeiler, 1993:110).

In considering the teachers' facilitative role in developing the learners' reading skills it seems imperative for Grade 1 teachers to have the necessary knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and motivation to empower themselves as a prerequisite to improving the learners' ability to read. The Foundation Phase teachers need to perform their facilitative role in developing the learners' reading skills within school contexts that motivate them to have a positive view of their teaching profession and their career as teachers. This is one of the criteria for success in assisting learners to be proficient readers in the PIRLS Report 2006, as distinct from those learners in countries that performed well in the school context category (Mullis *et al.*, 2007:12). Contrary to the PIRLS Report, the Systemic Evaluation Report indicates that South African teachers are extremely unhappy with their jobs and, given the opportunity, would change them without hesitation (DoE, 2003c: 23). The Grade 1 teachers selected to participate in my study need assistance to reverse this situation.

The above discussion serves as background towards understanding that Sesotho-speaking teachers were expected to adapt to the new demands of facilitating language and literacy development within the context of the NCS and OBE. It also

seemed imperative that the facilitation of the development of reading skills occurs within the same context. Since the researcher is concerned about how the teaching and learning of Sesotho occurs, it was deduced that the problem of the learners' poor performance in reading might emanate from the way the Grade 1 teachers were facilitating the development of reading skills in Sesotho. This deduction was based on the notion that the development of learners' reading skills is the teachers' responsibility and occurs within a social context in which teachers are an indispensable component (Pretorius & Machet, 2004:47; Staiger, 1973:18-19).

Since the researcher was concerned about how Grade 1 teachers, at the Foundation Phase, facilitate the development of their learners' reading skills, it was decided to undertake a study to determine how they were facilitating the development of reading skills in Sesotho.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The DoE (1997:2), in the Language-in-Education Policy, recommends that Foundation Phase learners be taught through their home languages. This follows the additive approach to multilingualism that outlines how languages should be taught and at which levels (Alexander, 2002:17; DoE, 1997:2). At the Foundation Phase, learners' home language (HL) must be presented as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), and the other languages that the learners are taught at school must be presented as either first or second additional languages in accordance with the sequence in which they are presented. Those learners whose HL is Sesotho must be taught through Sesotho, and later in the year, add another language as a subject, perhaps English, as their first additional language. Afrikaans can then be taught as the second additional language (DoE, 2002b:4-5). Sesotho-speaking learners are entitled to be taught how to read in Sesotho. The intention is to maintain a smooth transition from the learners' knowledge of spoken language to the written language.

In this study focus was laid on how Grade 1 Sesotho-speaking teachers facilitate the development of their learners' reading skills in Sesotho within the context of OBE and the NCS. The purpose was to determine how Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of their learners' reading skills under their prevailing circumstances,

what problems they encountered that might have contributed to the learners' poor performance in reading and what could be done to improve the current practices. The teachers' improvement had to be assessed against the guidelines formulated by the researcher in conjunction with the teachers. Embedded in the purpose was the empowerment of Grade 1 teachers in terms of recognising their potential as change agents. By engaging in action research, the teachers could empower themselves and take initiatives to address problematic issues they encounter.

When Grade 1 teachers are engaged in action, it was hoped that they would realise that they could be proactive in resolving problems that directly affect teaching and learning or any aspect of their profession. They would be encouraged to start a bottom-up approach to problem-solving instead of being comfortable with the top-down approach so familiar to the teaching profession. The teachers could engage in action research by following the cyclical process, which involves working through a series of steps. These steps are planning, taking action to implement the plan, observing, and evaluating the effects of the action. This would hopefully develop within them an ability to reflect on their own practical actions and the effects of those actions as they improve their facilitative role in the development of reading skills.

1.3 NECESSITY OF THE RESEARCH

The reports of the PIRLS 2001 and 2006 and the Systemic Evaluations of 2001 and 2007 released the findings that South African primary school learners are not able to read properly (Challis, 2007; DoE, 2003c; Mullis *et al.*, 2007). These findings made headline news in many newspapers (*Business Day*, 22/08/2006; *Business Day*, 03/12/2007a; *Rapport*, 16/10/2005). The *Business Day* newspaper, dated the 22nd of August 2006 and Fleisch (2008:v) raised a concern about primary school learners' lack of reading skills. In acknowledging that between 70-80% of primary school children were unable to read fluently in their LoLT, they warned that the situation was at crisis level. In response, Naledi Pandor, the then Minister of Education, announced that her department would release a Literacy Strategy, which was to be implemented in order to improve Foundation Phase learners' reading performance in 2008 (*Business Day*, 03/12/2007b).

The problem of learners being unable to read properly may be related to a failure by Grade 1 teachers in Mangaung primary schools to follow the same reading programme in developing reading skills. A few pilot schools were assisted by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as the Molteno Project (*Breakthrough to Literacy*) and the READ Educational Trust (READ) (Chapter 4:4.3; 4.4). The majority of the schools did not follow a specific reading programme and in those schools in which teachers did not implement either of the two programmes the teachers themselves interpreted and applied the OBE principles as stated in the NCS. However, the launch of the Foundations for Learning Campaign in 2008, as an intervention strategy, was an initiative from the DoE to ensure that all the primary schools would adopt the READ programme and that the teachers would apply its methodologies, strategies and skills to facilitate the development of reading skills (Government Gazette, No 30880:14 March 2008). The researcher thus realised a need to investigate how Grade 1 teachers develop reading skills in schools that were receiving assistance from the Molteno Project and READ Educational Trust, as well as in those that had not received any support from the NGOs. The purpose was to obtain a holistic picture of the assistance required by selected teachers, then to develop guidelines for improving facilitation of the development of reading skills.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problem manifested itself from the reports that learners were unable to read effectively and that Grade 1 teachers were experiencing difficulties in facilitating the development of reading skills within the context of OBE. In addition to personal interest in identifying the research problem, the researcher also has practical concerns with regard to learners' poor reading performance and that teachers experience problems in facilitating the development of reading skills in Sesotho (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006:20). The researcher therefore undertook this study focussing on assisting the selected Grade 1 teachers to be in a better position to facilitate the development of reading skills in Sesotho. The following questions are pertinent to the study:

- How do Grade 1 teachers in some Mangaung schools facilitate the development of reading skills under their prevailing circumstances?

- What can the Grade 1 teachers and I do to improve their facilitative role in the development of reading skills?
- How can the Grade 1 teachers and I assess the teachers' progress as they improve their facilitative role in the development of reading skills?

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To determine how the selected Grade teachers in some Mangaung schools facilitate the development of reading skills in order to identify problems that are pertinent to their situation;
- To plan how to address and resolve those problems;
- To design an assessment instrument in the form of pre- and post-intervention tests to measure the teachers' progress;
- To formulate the guidelines that will assist the Grade 1 teachers to improve the facilitation of the development of reading skills in Sesotho;
- To implement the guidelines; and
- To assess the implementation of the guidelines and repeat the cycle if necessary.

In an attempt to answer the research questions, the researcher worked with Grade 1 teachers in schools in which Sesotho is taught as Home Language and used as the LoLT. For the first two questions, including the first two objectives, the researcher selected one school which followed the Molteno Project (*Breakthrough to Literacy*), one which followed the READ programme, and two schools which were not assisted by NGOs. The data obtained from the observations enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of how reading was developed in those schools. This data, complemented by theoretical knowledge from a literature study, provided a frame of reference as to how teachers can facilitate the development of reading skills. The second and the third research questions were answered by action research, with the teachers who were part of it being selected from the schools which were not funded by NGOs. In so doing, the researcher used intensity sampling to select schools that were "information-rich cases" (Gray, 2004:325).

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The acquisition of reading skills is a social activity which highlights the importance of 'adult-child interaction' and the significance of social interaction and language use (Newman & Holzman, 1993:70; Jordan, Carlile & Stack, 2008:59). The product of the interaction between an adult and a child leads to knowledge creation (Jordan, Carlile & Stack, 2008:59; Wessels, 2010:1). The teacher and learners are in a relationship in which the teacher is mature and the learners are still maturing, therefore the teacher must create an environment in which s/he assists the process. In this relationship between learning and development, the Grade 1 teacher observes each learner's reading potential and how much s/he can improve (mature) on her/his own and in collaboration with other learners (Lenyai, 2013:15 & 32; Wessels, 2010:2). The teacher takes into cognisance that each learner can learn to read better when supported by the teacher and other learners, and in so doing provides assistance by considering the actual reading development of each learner and her/his 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978:86).

The teacher facilitates the development of reading skills by pulling learners ahead as they acquire reading skills, encouraging them to construct their own knowledge from what they are reading and link it prior knowledge (Jordan, Carlile & Stack, 2008:59-60; Vygotsky, 1987:208-209; Wessels, 2010:3). When the Grade 1 teacher assists a learner to perform a reading task which is beyond her capability s/he is providing 'scaffolding' to allow the learner to gradually master the task. The teacher can withdraw assistance once s/he is convinced that the learners can perform the task independently.

Drawing from the discussion above, the study is located within the theoretical framework of 'constructivism', a theory that affirms that each learner constructs knowledge for her/himself and in so doing is learning. The focus of teaching and learning should primarily rest on how the learner thinks about learning, and that knowledge can never be independent of the meaning attributed to experience by the learner, or community of learners (Hein, 1991:1-2). 'Social constructivism' confirms that knowledge construction depends on the role played by society and culture, and influences how each learner perceives, interprets and attaches meanings to personal

experiences. However, constructivism acknowledges that while it is possible for learners to have shared meanings and understandings about their experiences, these will be different because they have multiple realities (Lenyai, 2013:32; Jordan, Carlile & Stack, 2008:59). In the constructivist paradigm, the Grade 1 teacher must take into consideration that reading helps each learner to construct her/his knowledge and that in the process of constructing meaning from the printed message learners are inspired to learn (Hein, 1991:1). The term 'facilitating the development of reading skills', thus reflects constructivism in practice.

The relationship between the researcher and the selected Grade 1 teachers also reflects the fundamental principles of social constructivism whereby the researcher, to some extent, supported the teachers in their learning and empowerment (Jordan, Carlile & Stack, 2008:59). The teachers were actively constructing their own knowledge of how they facilitate the development of reading skills by means of discovery and exploration within their socio-cultural context. As co-researchers, the teachers were engaged in collaborative social interactions between themselves as educators and the researcher as the expert to ensure that they achieved the purpose and objectives of the study. Collaborative learning took place when the teachers worked together with the researcher and amongst themselves, motivating, supporting and sharing responsibility for accomplishing a shared goal. The researcher became the facilitator as she, together with the Grade 1 teachers created experiences from which the Grade 1 teachers constructed their own meaning of facilitating the development of reading skills. The researcher provided scaffolding to assist the teachers to construct new meanings and understandings of how they should facilitate the development of reading skills.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative in nature and has an action research component which is both participatory and emancipatory.

1.6.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research was considered appropriate for the study as it was concerned with understanding the meaning Grade 1 teachers have constructed through their

experiences as they are lived and felt, as well as how they make sense of their teaching practice as they interact with other Grade 1 teachers (Sherman & Webb, as cited in Merriam, 1998:6). Involved in field work, the researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, from which a rich description of the product emerged (Merriam, 1998:6-8; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:322). Data was collected in the form of words and video-recordings rather than numbers, as would have been used in quantitative research, and analysed inductively in order to capture the meanings given by the selected Grade 1 teachers themselves (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:4-6). Immersed in the natural settings of the Grade 1 teachers, the researcher employed observations, interviews and documentary analysis.

Since qualitative research has as its starting point the actual settings as the direct source of data, the researcher understood data collected in the context in which it occurred, i.e., developing reading in Grade 1 classrooms, without any attempts from the researcher to manipulate or control the behaviour or settings in a negative way (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:321). However, the researcher's presence in the classrooms during the in-depth situation analysis and the intervention had a positive influence on how teachers facilitate the development of reading skills. The way they constructed meaning was influenced by the larger situational contexts, referred to as 'context sensitivity', a phenomenon that also plays a significant role in the larger context in which the research is conducted (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:4-6).

Commencing the study with a plan or design does not necessarily involve adhering tenaciously to the original plan or design, even when the data changes, hence the *emergent* design is appropriate in qualitative research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:322). As a consequence, the researcher sometimes visited both the Grade 1 and 2 classrooms to determine how teachers facilitated the development of reading skills as well as to observe the behaviour of the teachers and learners in their natural setting.

1.6.2 Action research

The researcher opted for action research, which is described as "the systematic study of attempts to improve educational practice by groups of participants by means

of their own practical actions and their own reflections upon the effects of those actions” (Kelly, as cited in Bryman & Burgess, 1999:202). It is a cyclical process of working through a series of phases which include planning, action, observing and evaluating the effects of the action. For Winter (as cited in Zuber-Skerritt, 1996:14) it serves as a link between self-evaluation and professional treatment involving reflection and changes in practice.

According to Gray (2004:374), research subjects or participants become researchers or develop a democratic partnership with the researcher. This research is therefore participatory and emancipatory. Research is seen as an agent of change in which the direct experiences of the participants are the source of data. This kind of research, which involves both the researcher and the participants in solving problem issues in order to improve or bring change, is called *participatory* action research. Participatory action research is suitable for this study because the selected Grade 1 teachers who were facilitating the development of reading skills became co-researchers. Together with the researcher, they were involved in resolving the problems they experienced in developing reading skills and in changing a situation that is problematic, while expanding scientific knowledge on reading.

This study intended to empower the selected Grade 1 teachers to improve on their facilitation skills in the development of reading of skills, and to reflect on their own practical actions and the effect of their actions as they bring about changes in their teaching practice (Gray, 2004:374; Kelly, as cited in Bryman & Burgess, 1999:202). The following steps of action research, which are explained in detail in Chapter 5, were followed in the intervention (Zuber-Skerrit, 1996:3):

- strategic planning;
- action, i.e., implementation of the plan;
- observation, evaluation and self-evaluation;
- critical and self-critical reflection on the results by evaluating the effects of the action.

The researcher used in-depth open-ended interviews, direct observation, and analysis of written documents, such as lesson preparations and reading materials, in order to study how the facilitation of reading takes place (Patton, as cited in Bryman

& Burgess, 1999:140). Video recordings were made to record live classroom interactions between teachers and their learners with the intention of capturing what and how reading activities took place (Gray, 2004:384).

1.6.3 Overview of how the study unfolded

Since action research encourages participants to develop a democratic partnership with the researcher, the researcher was engaged in a search with the Grade 1 teachers for ways to better facilitate the development of reading skills. The following steps were followed in order to address the stated problem.

1.6.3.1 Literature review on reading

The researcher continuously consulted relevant and current sources to acquire in-depth knowledge pertaining to the facilitative role of the Grade 1 teachers in developing learners' reading skills. This included conceptualising 'reading', observing how it takes place in Grade 1 classes, and determining which reading methodologies, strategies and skills were being applied (Chapters 2, 3, 4). The National Reading Strategy (DoE, 2008g) and the Foundations for Learning Campaign (Republic of South Africa (RSA) Government Gazette Number 30880, 2008), which were implemented by the Department of Education, as a response to improving learners' reading skills at the Foundation Phase, were also informative in this regard (Chapter 4:4.2.3). The report of the Foundation Phase conference (DoE, 2008h) was also useful in highlighting how the DoE strengthened and sustained the Foundations for Learning Campaign and showcased best practice in the Foundation Phase.

1.6.3.2 Empirical investigation in the form of action research

a) In-depth situation analysis

The aim of the in-depth situation analysis was to construct a picture of how Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills by analysing and reflecting on their practice. The problems they experienced in facilitating the development of reading skills were revealed through interviews, observations and video-recording of lesson presentations (Chapter 6).

b) *Strategic planning of action*

The researcher, together with the teachers, discussed and planned how to improve their facilitation of the learners' development of reading skills. Analysis was conducted of Foundations for Learning Campaign (FfLC) and NCS policy documents, books and other materials which were easily accessible and important for the development of reading skills in Grade 1. An awareness workshop was planned to clarify some misconceptions and to motivate the teachers to participate in the intervention of the study (Chapter 7). A measuring instrument, in the form of pre-and post intervention tests, was designed from insights resulting from the in-depth situation analysis and literature study. The researcher and the selected Grade 1 teachers formulated the guidelines to benchmark the teachers' progress in improving their facilitative role. When a consensus was reached the guidelines were ready for implementation (Chapter 8:8.3). The teachers' performance in the intervention was rated according to a scale ranging from 1 Poor; 2 Satisfactory; 3 Good; 4 Very good; and 5 Excellent at the end of each spiral cycle (Chapter 8:8.5.14; 8.6.8; 8.7.9).

c) *Implementation of action*

The researcher conducted the workshop as part 1 of the intervention, and in part 2 observed the teachers as they implemented the guidelines by presenting their reading lessons (Chapter 8:8.5; 8.6; 8.7). The implementation of the guidelines was an indicator of whether teachers were or were not improving their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. The lesson presentations took place in the teacher's classroom, the only exception being when a Grade 2 teacher had to present a lesson to Grade 1 learners. Constructive feedback was a motivating factor for the teachers' improvement.

d) *Critical reflection / evaluation of changes*

The researcher evaluated and reflected on how the intervention occurred, providing opportunities for the teachers to assess one another. The results of the pre- and post-intervention tests (Chapter 8:8.2; 9.3.1), the teachers' journals (Chapter 9:9.3.2) and the epiphanic moments (Chapter 9:9.3.3) were helpful for reflections. The cyclical process of action research, allows for more cycles and spiral cycles to develop, indicating further research possibilities.

1.6.4 Validity

The researcher ensured *validity* of the study by selecting and using the research instruments which it was hoped would measure what was intended to be measured (Gray, 2004:90). Validity may either be internal or external, the former allowing the researcher to seek to discover the congruency of the findings with reality of the selected participants' life worlds. The latter allows the researcher to determine the extent to which the findings of one study can be generalised to other situations. In the case of this study, the intention was not to generalise the findings, but for people to perceive their relevance to their situations (Merriam, 1998:201,207). In Maxwell's terms (1996:87), validity refers to the *correctness* or *credibility* of the study, an explanation more befitting a qualitative study (Chapter 5:5.5.1). The researcher also considered threats to validity, such as *bias* and *reactivity*. With the former, the researcher avoided selecting data that fitted preconceptions and with the latter avoided asking leading questions (Maxwell, 1996:87-91). As Mouton (2002:109) argues, validity should be applied to the whole research process.

1.6.5 Reliability

The researcher ensured that the instruments measured consistently whatever was intended to be measured. *Reliability* raises the question of whether the same findings would be reached each time if research procedures used by the first researcher were applied by a second (Merriam, 1998:205; Wallace, 2001:36). *Dependability*, meanwhile, is measured in terms of stability of the results (Gray, 2004:344; Merriam, 1998:205-207), and as with validity the researcher must minimise threats to it by explaining the basis for the selection of participants. Use of *triangulation*, or multiple methods of data collection and analysis, and an *audit trail*, enabled the researcher to give a detailed description of how data was collected, how categories were derived and decisions made throughout the study (Chapter 5).

1.6.6 Research instruments

The researcher used instruments that allow for thorough action research, namely in-depth open-ended interviews, direct observation, and written documents (Patton, as cited in Bryman & Burgess, 1999:140). Audio and video recordings were effective in collecting data (Gray, 2004:384-385), as were keeping a detailed diary (Winter, as

cited in Zuber-Skerritt, 1996:15-16). The researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, and responsive to the context, at times taking the role of participant observer. Interviews were held to discover the meanings the Grade 1 teachers ascribed to facilitating the development of reading skills, and allow them to reflect on their daily activities. The researcher was able to probe for detailed responses and consequently gave the teachers the opportunity to clarify issues raised (Gray, 2004:214). In using observation, the researcher was in a privileged position to go beyond the teachers' opinions and self-interpretation of their behaviour, towards evaluating their action in practice. They were observed as they facilitated the development of reading skills in addition to explaining to the researcher how they did so (Gray, 2004:238). In the case of participant observation, the researcher established a rapport with Grade 1 teachers which necessitated informal interviews. The researcher also thoroughly studied the NCS policy documents for information concerning how the facilitation of the development of reading skills was expected to take place by the DoE (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:94-95 & 124). Value was added to the study by the Molteno Project (*Breakthrough to Literacy*) and the READ Educational Trust reading programmes, as well as the Foundations for Learning Campaign, launched in 2008. The researcher also studied documents such as the tests and memoranda, teachers' journals and learners' written activities.

1.6.7 Sampling

The researcher selected the elements in a population based upon information obtained on each of the elements (Mouton, 2002:133-135). The sample was chosen on the basis that the Grade 1 teachers, their classrooms and the curriculum changes that affected their facilitative role, as they had the knowledge and information related to the phenomenon being investigated. The researcher's sample allowed for involvement of a selection of few a cases, which gave valuable insights into the phenomenon being studied in depth (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:326). The researcher selected those cases (Grade 1 teachers) which were perceived as having a wealth of information and allowed an in-depth study of the phenomenon the researcher was investigating without any intentions of making generalisations to all such cases (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:326). Maxwell (1996:69) writes that the

process of sampling must also take into consideration the settings, events and processes that will provide important information on the phenomenon of interest.

Sampling was purposeful, selected for in-depth situation analysis as follows:

- one school which had followed the Molteno Project (*Breakthrough to Literacy*);
- one school which had followed the READ programme; and
- two schools which were not assisted by NGOs.

The rationale behind the selection of the schools funded by the NGOs was to observe how Grade 1 teachers facilitated the development of reading skills. The researcher then worked with only two schools which did not receive any private funding. In three schools there were a maximum of four Grade 1 teachers. In this way the researcher used intensity sampling strategy whereby all the schools selected were “information-rich cases” (Gray, 2004:325). Included in the sample were two officials from the DoE, who were responsible for the Foundation Phase. The researcher conducted a telephonic interview with one learning facilitator, during the in-depth situation analysis. The Deputy Director of the Foundation Phase in the Free State was interviewed on the 17th February 2010 to determine the current state of affairs then in the primary schools in Mangaung.

1.6.8 Ethics

The researcher was granted permission from the DoE Free State Province and the schools to work with the teachers and as such was expected to behave in relation to the research participants. Since action research is deeply embedded in existing social organisations it was important to respect the general procedures of the organisation, more so for an action researcher collaborating with participants for their mutual benefit. The researcher took cognisance of the privacy of the participants, confidentiality, promises and reciprocity, informed consent, risk assessment and data access and ownership (Gray, 2004:59-61; 388-390).

The participants entered the research projects voluntarily, understood the nature of the study and the dangers and the obligations involved. They were assured that they would not be exposed to risks greater than any gains they might derive (Bogdan &

Biklen, 2003:43). Other guidelines adhered to were to avoid research sites where informants may feel coerced to participate in the research, honour the informants' privacy, protect the subjects' identities, treat subjects with respect and seek their co-operation in the research and tell the truth when writing up the research findings.

The researcher kept the participants informed about the objectives of the study and how it was progressing, and maintained good faith. The researcher promised not to reveal any confidential or sensitive information, unless permitted to do so. The participants were made aware that they might withdraw from the research at any time without being intimidated.

1.6.9 Data analysis and interpretation of the results

According to Merriam (1998:155-162), there are several strategies for data analysis. Content analysis and analytic induction are qualitative in nature, in the sense that it is the content of the interviews, field notes and documents that the researcher analysed. Focus was thus placed on the kinds of performance indicators that showed whether the researcher and co-researchers would be able to initiate change. Data was broken into smaller parts to reveal their characteristic elements and structure, and thus to give it meaning and provide insights. Through content analysis the researcher identified special classes or categories within the data which would contribute to the findings (Gray, 2004:319-328; 380). The researcher interpreted data by dealing with the development of ideas about the findings and how they could be related to the literature and to the broader concerns and concepts. By interpreting the data, the researcher made the findings understandable and explained their significance to the topic. In this study, data analysis and interpretation were carried out partly in the field, when the researcher was collecting data, and more in detail afterwards (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:147-160).

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

It is necessary to clarify terms and concepts used throughout the study, in how they are used in the literature and understood by the researcher.

1.7.1 Reading

'Reading', as one of the four aspects of language usage, can be understood from two perspectives, as a language skill (Geske & Ozola, 2008:71) and as a process of constructing meaning (Coltman & Place, 2013:99). In this study, the researcher prefers the description of reading as an *interactive-constructive* process, necessitating a young, Grade 1 reader to demonstrate the ability to comprehend, interpret and respond to text, based on prior knowledge (Carrilo, 1976:2; Dechant, 1982:3,288; Flanagan, 1995:2-3; Harris & Smith, 1986:4-5; Kelly, 2008:3; Lapp & Flood, 1986:6; Wessels, 2010:46-47). In demonstrating her/his ability to read, a young Grade 1 reader is assisted to assume the role of a code breaker, text participant, text user and text analyst (Coltman & Place, 2013:108-109). Through reading, as an interaction between the reader and the printed page, a young reader constructs her/his own meaning based on background knowledge and experience. Meaning is constructed as the reader uses flexible and independent reading strategies, such as sampling, prediction and inference, as well as confirming, correcting and selecting graphophonic, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic cues from the language. Reading becomes easy if a child has acquired a substantial vocabulary and structural knowledge of the language being read and has acquired an adequate level of cognitive development and intelligence to enable her/him to make sense of the ideas presented (Coltman & Place, 2013:108-109; Feitelson, as cited in Staiger, 1973:27; Saskatchewan Education, 1997:1).

1.7.2 Teaching reading

The terms 'teaching reading', 'reading instruction' and 'facilitating reading' are activities intended to assist the learner to develop reading skills. The term 'teaching' has evolved through the ages. Traditionally, it was understood as an intentional activity by a teacher to present knowledge, skills and values to the learner, who in turn reciprocates by showing willingness to acquire the knowledge, skills and values presented by the teacher (Fraser, Loubser & Van Rooy, 1990:3; Killen, 2010:1&11). Teaching and instruction are sometimes used synonymously because the teacher reveals, shows or indicates to the learner the aspects of reality of which the learner must take cognisance (Kruger, Oberholzer, Van Schalkwyk & Whittle, 1983:15). Instruction is a foundation on which successful learning can take place as the

teacher transfers knowledge, skills, techniques, as well as values and attitudes to the learner (Fraser, Loubser & Van Rooy, 1990:3 & 27-29).

The advent of OBE and the influence of the theory of constructivism in the teaching and learning environments necessitated a shift of paradigm away from over-emphasis on the subject content towards a learner-centred approach (Wessels, 2010:2-4). However, O'Dwyer (2006:1-2) and Vakalisa (2011:3) warn that a teacher-centred approach cannot be completely disregarded but rather it can be used to complement a learner-centred approach because the teacher is still regarded as the authority and as a source of knowledge. The OBE learning environment therefore brings into prominence the notion of 'reflective teaching' highlighting the Grade 1 teachers' ability to think deeply and critically about their actions and attitudes and then making decisions about improving them (Vakalisa, 2011:55). The result has been a movement away from 'teaching reading' to 'facilitating the development of reading skills'. As one of the many responsibilities of the Grade 1 teacher, it requires her/him to act as a model reader for learners in shared and guided reading sessions, show learners how to apply reading strategies, such as rereading, reading ahead and using pictures, provide a rich and varied literacy environment that includes interesting reading material and displays, and engage multimedia resources which reflect the cultural diversity of the school and community, provide opportunities for discussion, teamwork and other social interaction that make reading interesting and fun, use effective practices for engaging learners in large groups (whole class shared reading and writing sessions), small groups (guided reading and writing sessions), and individual instruction (independent reading), use reflexive practice, observation and a variety of assessment strategies to identify each learner's needs and provide differentiated instruction (DoE, 2008:7).

In addition, the Grade 1 teachers' role is to also motivate learners to read extensively, provide sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension, help them to develop appropriate active strategies to construct meaning, read fluently, and equip them with the skills to decode unfamiliar words and to show an understanding of how phonemes are connected to print (Saskatchewan Government, 2010).

1.7.3 Learning

Learning is closely linked with instruction. It is a process of interpreting new knowledge whereby learners are afforded opportunities to make connections, identify patterns, and organise previously unrelated pieces of knowledge, behaviour and activities that allow them to create new meanings (Fraser, Loubser & Van Rooy, 1990:3 & 27-29; Tylee, 1999:1-2; Vakalisa, 2011:6). Recently, learning is viewed as being participative due to its nature as stimulating active learning, encouraging personal interpretation, developing independent thinking and nurturing inquisitiveness (Vakalisa, 2011:11-12). In participative learning, learners are regarded as significant role players in the construction of knowledge. They are encouraged to express their own views on the content freely and thus taking ownership of the learning process (Vakalisa, 2011:6-7).

True to a learner-centred approach, learning is a process of actively involving learners in their own learning as they organise and interact with materials, direct certain processes, identify patterns, and become purposefully engaged in all activities that encourage learning in the classroom (Tylee, 1999:1-2). Grade 1 learners learn effectively when they can apply knowledge to solve problems, communicate their knowledge to others, perceive relationships between their existing knowledge and the new things they are learning, retain newly acquired knowledge for a long time and when they show willingness to learn more (Killen, 2010:4; Vakalisa, 2011:6). This rejects the notion that learners are empty vessels which must be filled with information but advocates that the more learners are actively involved in learning the more they become independent, responsible and self-reliant.

The Grade 1 teacher maximises learning by means of ***self-affirmation*** - the learners view themselves as effective learners and the teachers provide them with feedback to that effect, by ***personal meaning*** - the learners are able to find personal meaning in their learning, making it relevant to them, ***active learning*** - the learners are active in the learning, whether that activity is physical (as for concrete learners), or intellectual (as for abstract reflective learners), ***collaborative learning*** - the learners are able to collaborate with others in the learning process and not view learning as an isolating experience, ***empowering*** - the learners are able to shape the learning

process, and have control over what is learnt and the direction of the learning (Tylee, 1999:3-4).

In learning to read, learners are assisted to become independent and skilful readers (DoE, 2008:7; Flanagan, 1995:7; Harris & Smith, 1986:30-31; Wessels, 2010:99). Being an independent reader involves the reader determining what s/he needs to know and do while reading. An independent reader reads for a purpose, draws on prior knowledge to construct meaning from it, identifies main ideas, and organises and uses them. S/he recognises that the text is not 'the' authority and the truth, nor independent and complete, but that it has a multiplicity of possible meanings. Reading the text should be carried out critically, recognising bias, interpreting, drawing conclusions and applying what has been read to appropriate situations.

1.7.4 A teacher

In traditional terms, a 'teacher' was perceived as a person, who assists learners to acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes often at a school or other place of formal education through an informal or formal approach to learning which includes a course of study and lesson plans (Criticos, Long, Mays, Moletsane, Mityane, Grosser & De Jager, 2012:27). A teacher was therefore, seen as an authoritarian, disciplinarian and an organiser in a classroom situation (Criticos *et al.*, 2012:27; Killen, 2010:1-2). The perception above was influenced by the learning theory of behaviourism, which portrays the teacher as a "didactic authority" who dominates the class with teacher talk and by giving instructions (Vakalisa, 2011:5). However, this view of the teacher became less significant with a paradigm shift from behaviourism towards the application of cognitivist and constructivist learning theories in the teaching and learning environments (Killen, 2010:6-10; Wessels, 2010:1-3). The learning theories above encourage participative learning and reflective teaching, which require a Grade 1 teacher to relinquish her/his teacher-centred position of power to adopt a more learner-centred approach to teaching and learning. In this context, Vakalisa (2011:3-5) talks about being a reflective teacher, who aims at encouraging learners "to critically evaluate the learning content against their own existing knowledge, and to consider views on the matter other than her/his own

The Grade 1 teachers facilitating the development of reading skills in a learner-centred environment are knowledgeable, passionate and confident about their subject. They communicate effectively with their learners. They are highly committed to helping their learners to learn well and are compassionate about their learners' welfare. They are also curious to learn more, patient and persistent in their endeavours, willing to share and collaborate, are resourceful and inventive. They are well organised, optimistic, ethical and reflective in their approach (Killen, 2010:37-39). As they facilitate the development of reading skills, Grade 1 teachers are expected to consider their learners' cognitive development, language and literacy development, physical development, emotional stability, motivation, prior knowledge and their attitudes towards school and learning (Killen, 2010:40-43). This knowledge is important in diagnosing and placing the learners, in designing learning at the correct level and using appropriate methods as well as managing disciplinary problems (Criticos *et al.*, 2012:166).

Since Grade 1 teachers' role is multifaceted, they play a significant role in the teaching and learning environment as subject discipline specialists, as learning mediators, as interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, as leaders, administrators and managers, as scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, as assessors and in their community, citizenship and pastoral role (RSA DoE, 2000:12-22; Tylee, 1999:1-2; Vakalisa, 2011:23-25). Due to the complex, uncertain, conflict-laden, unstable and unique circumstances under which teachers perform their facilitative role in the development of reading skills, Grade 1 teachers are regarded as change agents. They need to adapt their teaching philosophy in order to accommodate curriculum change, changes within the pedagogy (Criticos *et al.*, 2012:8-11) A teacher is also a reader, whose reading competence must strongly reflect her/his knowledge of the world, linguistic knowledge, text structure knowledge, metacognitive knowledge and reading rates, which refer to the reader's ability to determine and adapt her/his reading tempo (Saskatchewan Education, 1997:2-4).

1.7.5 A teacher as a facilitator

The Grade 1 teacher is expected to be a 'facilitator' in the OBE teaching and learning environments, with the purpose of allowing learners to be responsible for their

learning (DoE, 2002a:11; Hoadley & Jansen, 2009:158; Jansen & Taylor, 2003:37). As facilitators, the Grade 1 teachers help learners to construct their own understanding, make sense of new information, integrate new information with their existing ideas to be aware of their thinking and learning processes and to apply new understandings in meaningful and relevant ways (Killen, 2010:2; Vakalisa, 2011:5). The implication is that the teacher becomes a leader and as such makes sure that learners are doing the right things and encourage them to manage themselves. The teacher's role, as a facilitator, is characterised by such types of behaviour as showing warmth, maintaining eye contact and using hand gestures, providing opportunities to learn, delegating responsibilities, generating ground rules and encouraging group discussions. In order to help learners to manage themselves, teachers as facilitators, need to prioritise group discussions, encourage decision-making, promote consensus between group members, set goals, bring topics to a close and draw conclusions from group discussions (Embedded Learning Academy, 2009:1-2).

To complement the view above, a teacher as a facilitator becomes a coach. S/he is a support system, to help learners to use what they know to learn new things, while providing them with opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions which enhance thinking. The teacher, as a facilitator, ensures that learners are accountable for their learning. According to Cooper (2009:1), as teachers continually hone their facilitation role, they should plan ahead and think about the needs of their learners, model what they want learners to do, monitor the amount of talking they do, give students opportunities to take responsibility for maintaining their classroom, teach learners how to use classroom materials, implement a workstation management board, and teach learners to ask questions to acquire information (Cooper, 2009:1).

In their facilitative role in developing reading skills, the Grade 1 teachers are expected to create opportunities for group discussions in the form of pre- and post-reading activities. As a consequence, they need to relinquish their position in front of the classroom as they disseminate information to passive learners, and instead create a cooperative learning environment which encourages shared learning. The teacher as a facilitator helps learners not only to express ideas but also to channel those ideas amongst themselves (Embedded Learning Academy, 2009:1-2). In the

case in which a teacher uses group work to enable learners to share ideas or solve a problem the problem should be conceived, meet course objectives/learning outcomes, be appropriate for the time allocated and require collaboration and discussion. The teacher, as a facilitator, then moves around from group, listening, answering questions and, if the situation demands, redirecting.

As facilitators in the development of the learners' reading skills, the Grade 1 teachers draw on the following four conditions (Tylee, 1999:2-5): Firstly, they continuously assess each learner's willingness and ability to read, as well as her/his beliefs about the nature of reading and preferred reading styles. Secondly, they plan reading based on the learning outcomes and, in the case of CAPS, aims and objectives. This necessitates teachers understanding the philosophy behind the learning outcomes, building personal theories about the nature of reading and developing reading opportunities in an environment conducive to learning. Thirdly, they implement the plan, showcasing different reading methodologies, strategies and skills. Fourthly, they evaluate the reading process, that is, revise how they assess their learners and the emotional climate prevailing in the classroom.

1.7.6 Home Language

Sesotho is one of the eleven official languages spoken in South Africa (DoE, 2002b:4; RSA Constitution, 1996). It is the language that Basotho children know best when they start school and they use to express their thoughts, formulate ideas and attach meaning to their emotions (Alexander, 2009:2). They acquire Sesotho through their interactions with the environment as they understand and put meaning to the life world. As a Home Language (HL), Sesotho is used as Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) at the Foundation Phase as stipulated in the Language in Education Policy; RSA (Alexander, 2009:2; DoE, 2002b:5; DoE, 1997:2). The use of Sesotho as a LoLT is crucial at the Foundation Phase where learners begin to read and write, formulate concepts and construct their own knowledge, scaffolded by the teachers. A HL can also be synonymous with First Language (L1) and mother tongue (Daems, Leysen, Messerschmidt & Rymenans, 1999:27). In the context of constructivism, the acquisition of HL is a social activity which a person experiences within a social group, by listening to people around and conversing with them (Flanagan, 1995:107). However, Mashiya (2011:22) and Gxilishe (2009:2) has established that there are

factors that inhibit mother tongue teaching such as perceiving English as a language of power, believing in the false notion that African languages are inferior and that teaching in Sesotho is a difficult practice.

1.7.7 Foundation Phase

The 'Foundation Phase' is a sub-level of the eight levels of the National Qualification Framework (NQF), grouped into three bands; General Education Training; (GET); Further Education and Training (FET); and Higher Education and Training (HET). The NQF is primarily about systemic change in terms of adaptability, flexibility, responsiveness and accountability in setting standards; relevance, quality, creativity in the design and implementation of learning programmes at all the bands (Nkomo, 2000:7-8). The Foundation Phase forms the first part of the GET band covering Grade R-3 and accommodates children ranging from age five to seven in the compulsory phase of formal schooling (Bengu as cited in DoE, 1997:31). The focus is the acquisition of primary skills, knowledge and values necessary for further learning (DoE, 2003:19).

1.8 LAYOUT OF THE THESIS

This thesis comprises the following chapters:

1.8.1 Chapter 1: Orientation

This chapter is an orientation of the whole study. It entails the statement of the problem, how the research was carried out, and gives a short description of the key concepts used.

1.8.2 Chapter 2: Literature review on *reading*

This is a theoretical chapter on the concept 'reading' and how it is understood in the National Curriculum Statement. This chapter briefly outlines how the PIRLS Report of 2006 and the Systemic Evaluation Reports of 2002 and 2007 shed more light in understanding the concept 'reading'. These reports reflect current views on the concept 'reading' and the development of reading skills at the Foundation Phase.

1.8.3 Chapter 3: Reading approaches at the Foundation Phase

The focus of this chapter is on the description of different reading approaches and how teachers can employ each one in the classroom. This chapter is also intended to give a brief overview of how these approaches evolved over time and on which learning theories they were based.

1.8.4 Chapter 4: Reading programmes at the Foundation Phase

Chapter 4 is an exposition of the reading programmes that dominated the development of reading in Sesotho at the Foundation Phase in the past three decades.

1.8.5 Chapter 5: Qualitative research design and methodology

This chapter presents an overview of how this qualitative study and its cyclical process of action research were carried out.

1.8.6 Chapter 6: Findings from the in-depth situation analysis

Data analysis and interpretation in the research findings of the in-depth situation analysis are presented in chapter 6. The findings determined how the intervention part should be implemented.

1.8.7 Chapter 7: Findings from Cycle 1 of the Intervention

This chapter describes the commencement of the cyclical process of the action research. The awareness workshop formed Cycle 1 of the intervention. It helped the selected Grade 1 teachers in understanding some key issues pertinent to their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. The reflections of Cycle 1 determined how Cycle 2 was put into action.

1.8.8 Chapter 8: Findings from Cycle 2 of the Intervention

Chapter 8 describes Cycle 2 of the Intervention. The selected Grade 1 teachers implemented the guidelines in three spiral cycles. Spiral Cycle 1 is the implementation of the guidelines. Spiral Cycle 2 focuses on improving the

implementation of the guidelines. In Spiral Cycle 3 the assessment of the implementation of the guidelines took place.

1.8.9 Chapter 9: Reflections on the Intervention

The focus of the reflections was on the improvements the teachers achieved in the intervention with special reference to the *post-intervention test*, the teachers' journals and epiphanic moments.

1.8.10 Chapter 10: Overview, Recommendations and Concluding thoughts

This is the final chapter of the thesis in which the research question is answered. Recommendations are suggested and the concluding thoughts wrap up the study.

1.9 CONCLUSION

Since primary school learners are unable to read properly, the Grade 1 Sesotho speaking teachers are faced with a mammoth task of assisting learners to read. As part of their facilitative role in the development of reading skills, they have to demonstrate understanding of the concepts *reading* and *reading process*. Their facilitative role demands that Grade 1 teachers should be competent in applying the reading methodologies, approaches and strategies which should render them effective in developing the learners' reading skills within the context of the NCS. The facilitation of the development of reading skills must happen in a print-rich language environment. Apparently, Grade 1 teachers were experiencing problems with regard to the facilitation of the development of reading skills.

This chapter, therefore, has included a description of the problem to be investigated and procedures followed in resolving it. The action research proposed in this study is aimed at empowering Grade 1 teachers to critically reflect on issues that were problematic and initiate the process of dealing with those issues so as to bring improvements and/or changes in how they facilitate the development of reading skills.

In the next chapter is an orientation about the concept 'reading'.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON *READING*

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In facilitating the development of reading skills, it looks as if Grade 1 teachers need to have a broad understanding of what the concept 'reading' means. An understanding of this concept can provide a framework for preparing Grade 1 teachers for their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. The focus of this chapter is to unpack the concept 'reading' in all its nuances in order to improve understanding of it with regard to facilitation of the development of reading skills. Reference is made to the processes associated with reading as one of the four basic language skills, and in turn the five components of developing reading skills by Grade 1 teachers. Also presented is an exposition of reading for meaning and reading comprehension as goals for learning to read. Included is a discussion on how reading is understood within the context of the NCS and PIRLS and how this understanding has influenced the facilitation of the development of reading skills in the Foundation Phase.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT 'READING'

Following the brief description of the concept 'reading' in Chapter 1, this chapter presents a more detailed one. The term reading has different but related meanings in the context of education, and can refer to a skill or a process. Reading, as one of the four basic skills, means that a reader is able to turn the collection of symbols (letters) which s/he sees on paper into communication (sounds) as one of the processes crucial in understanding the written message (Chapter 1:1.1). The 'reading process' entails making meaning from the written word, and will be further expounded on and analysed in the following sections. Emerging from various authors (Carrilo, 1976:2; Dechant, 1982:3,288; Flanagan, 1995:2-3; Harris & Smith, 1986:4-5; Kelly, 2008:3; Lapp & Flood, 1986:6) is an understanding that 'reading' is a complex process that involves several operations influenced by intellectual and emotional overlays of the

reader. Reading is broadly described as an interactive, constructive and meaning-based process that depends upon purpose, background knowledge and the task itself. In this process, the reader strives towards obtaining comprehension, making interpretations and responding to text in accordance with prior knowledge, rooted in his or her social and cultural background (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:81-82; Wessels, 2010:46-47).

2.2.1 Reading process

In their facilitative role in the development of reading skills, it seems as if Grade 1 teachers need to take cognisance of the ten steps in the reading process, identified and outlined by Harris and Smith (1986:26-31) in turn as follows:

2.2.1.1 *Being confronted with the printed page* involves translating and relating it to spoken language (Wessels, 2010:35).

2.2.1.2 *Decoding* is a process of relating letters and pattern of letters to the sounds they stand for, so as to enhance basic recognition of the word as it is understood by the reader in her/his listening vocabulary (Wessels, 2010:35-36). For Dechant (1982:13) it is a process of reconstructing the writer's thoughts and ideas presented in written symbols on paper, made possible by the reader's ability to discriminate the symbols used in the writing system of her/his language. Hunter-Grundin (1979:2) refers to it as a process of translating units of written language into the spoken language in order to understand the text.

2.2.1.3 *Perceiving image* implies evoking a perception or a perceptual image accomplished by recognising a word on the sensory level. It is a first step towards forming a concept.

2.2.1.4 *Generalising* is a process of subsuming the image under the broader idea.

2.2.1.5 *Identifying* is the process of searching the message for specific ideas, analysing it and evaluating it.

2.2.1.6 *Recalling* involves returning to the whole message after having understood it, to recall details or parts that are important ('literal comprehension').

2.2.1.7 *Analysing* involves manipulating the events or ideas of a message in order to accomplish a specific end (Seligmann, 2012:120).

2.2.1.8 *Judging* means developing and applying selected criteria to a passage to decide its worthiness, which entails critical reading (Seligmann, 2010:120).

2.2.1.9 *Extending* is a process of rejecting the selection and the author who wrote it or looking for a similar work in order to build additional knowledge.

2.2.1.10 *Expressing internal response* may be carried out either orally, in writing, through a gesture, or by synthesising or rejecting what has been learnt ('creative reading').

In becoming aware of these steps, the Grade 1 teachers notice that in facilitating the development of reading skills, the operations discussed above, may not necessarily occur in a step-by-step fashion with their learners. When their learners gradually become mature readers, they might skip some basic operations and leap to advanced ones, depending on their language competence and memory (Harris & Smith, 1986:30-31). The Grade 1 teachers need to be aware that this reading process could therefore be expanded to show the affective dimension, cutting across the entire range of reading operations and pointing to the interplay between the message and the memory bank of the reader. Lapp and Flood (1986:6) and Wessels (2010:35-36) summarise the reading process as letter and word recognition, comprehension of the concepts conveyed by the printed words, and reaction to and assimilation of the new knowledge from the printed page with the reader's past experience.

2.2.2 Reading as a cognitive-affective process

Harris and Smith (1986:5,23) and Kelly (2008:3) describe the concept 'reading' as an intellectual and emotional act of perceiving a printed message across a range of thinking operations, often guided by a purpose. In understanding this description, the Grade 1 teacher, will be able to assist her/his readers to interpret the *message* conveyed by the author, understand the *print*, which is an alphabetic code (the use of sound-spelling patterns and the conventions of punctuation to approximate spoken language), evoke *emotions* by showing a recognition that feelings and connotations prompted by the topic and the author's formulation of the message will influence

perception, and use *intellect* to identify the activity as cognitive, rational, and meaning-driven.

This cognitive and affective transaction of constructing meaning happens simultaneously and in a complementary way (Saskatchewan Education, 1997:1). Following on the same line of thinking in the statement above, it is maintained that reading is characterised by a continuing 'give-and-take' relationship between the reader and the print on the page. With regard to the cognitive position, the Grade 1 teacher assists the reader to construct meaning to be remembered in terms of what actions to take, conclusions to draw and concepts to apply. The affective position arouses personal feelings and ideas generated through the reading transaction that are unique to every reader. For Flanagan (1995:2) and Seligmann (2012:106), reading is driven by a clear purpose that helps the reader to ask questions about the text.

Kelly (2008:3) and Wessels (2007:101) argue that the reading process is an interactive one, characterised by the reader's active participation, with the reader simultaneously decoding the text, constructing meaning and relating it to prior knowledge. On the other hand, Staiger (1973:15) and Wessels (2007:102) caution that the meaning intended by the author may not necessarily be the one derived by the reader, primarily because each reader has unique expectations of the text and ways of using personal knowledge of the language cueing systems to understand it (Saskatchewan Education, 1997:1).

From these perspectives, the development of reading skills is a conscious, purposeful and deliberate act that is important in facilitating the development of reading skills.

2.2.3 Components of developing reading skills

Reading, as an interactive-constructive process, requires Grade 1 teachers to use a variety of skills and strategies before, during and after reading (DoE, 2008i:8; Saskatchewan Education, 1997:1). The development of reading skills may be broken

down into five major components, dealt with in turn in this section (DoE, 2008i:11-12; Shriver, 2006:1-4; Washtell, 2008a:33).

2.2.3.1 Phonemic awareness

The Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of ‘phonemic awareness’ when they create opportunities for their learners to be able to hear individual sounds in speech and understand that words are made up of individual sounds known as ‘phonemes’ (De Sousa & Broom, 2011:3; DoBE Free State Province, 2011c:2; Trawick-Smith, 2010:286; Yopp, cited in Diamond & Mandel, 1995). The ‘phonemes’ are the smallest speech sounds, represented by letters of the alphabet to distinguish one word from another, e.g., *pula* (rain) and *dula* (to sit). In developing ‘phonemic awareness’, the Grade 1 teacher is able to help her/his young readers to hear and distinguish sounds as well as to see the correspondence between the sounds (phonemes) and their written form (graphemes). It lies behind the ability to manipulate sounds through hearing rhymes or alliteration, blending sounds to form words, counting phonemes in words, identifying the beginning, middle and final sounds in words, substituting one phoneme for another, and deleting phonemes from words (Shriver, 2006:1; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998:52-53; Vacca, Vacca, Gove, Burkey, Lenhart & McKeon, 2003:120).

Pressley (2001:6) asserts that the facilitation of the development of this awareness is critical for Grade 1 learners beginning to read, as it is instrumental in helping them realise that words only have meaning when the phonemes are combined in a particular order and that they can match the sounds to the letters and letter patterns. The Grade 1 teachers who facilitate the development of phonemic awareness assist learners to notice, think about and work with individual sounds. Lack of it is a strong indicator that learners will experience reading difficulties (DoE, 2008i:11; Shriver, 2006:1-4; Washtell, 2008a:33).

According to Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998:51-53), a general appreciation of the sounds of speech as distinct from their meaning is embraced by another concept, referred to as ‘phonological awareness’. In developing ‘phonological awareness’ the Grade 1 teachers create opportunities for learners to hear and manipulate sounds in

words (Lenyai, 2013:4). In so doing, the teachers also assist learners in understanding that words can be divided into a sequence of phonemes, a process which makes understanding phonemic awareness easier. The Grade 1 teachers also assist learners to understand that the development of phonological awareness (and other metalinguistic skills) is closely intertwined with growth in basic language proficiency during the pre-school years.

2.2.3.2 Word identification and recognition

The Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of 'word identification' when they assist their learners, as young readers, to identify unfamiliar words as they name the printed words by applying certain strategies to recognise them such as meaning and picture cues as well as understanding how words are used in a sentence (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:171-172). As they facilitate the development of 'word identification', Grade 1 teachers need to take into cognisance that it is influenced by visual discrimination of a word and their young reader's ability to pronounce it (Dechant, 1982:288). Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998:66-67) maintain that word identification is a prerequisite for developing more advanced skills, such as phonological decoding, which centres on the reader's knowledge of the phonological structure of spoken words, and lexical-orthographic competence, which uses knowledge of how orthographic units represent those structures. In this component, the Grade 1 teacher makes her learners aware that letters (graphemes) of the alphabet, either by themselves or with other letters, stand for sounds or phonemes, a phenomenon known as the 'alphabetic principle', and by which speech can be converted into print and vice versa (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:13; Washtell, 2008a:33).

In developing 'word recognition', the Grade 1 teacher assists her/his reader to be able to recognise words immediately and effortlessly by applying their knowledge of phonemic awareness (DoE, 2008i:13; Vacca *et al.*, 2003:171-172). The teacher may use categories of word recognition, such as 'sight-words recognition' and 'sight vocabulary' synonymously with 'word recognition'. Sight words or look-and-say words are words used frequently and which learners can identify by their shape and length.

2.2.3.3 Vocabulary

The development of 'vocabulary' is realised when Grade 1 teachers understand that it is an all-embracing term that reflects the depth (level of understanding) and breadth (size and scope) of the words a learner uses in listening, speaking, reading and writing (Lenyai, 2013:88; Vacca *et al.*, 2003:283). Seemingly, a rich vocabulary is vital for the development of fluency and comprehension (DoE, 2008i:16; Shriver, 2006:3). In facilitating the development of vocabulary, Grade 1 teachers gradually help learners to acquire knowledge and understanding of a wide range of words, encompassing the knowledge that each word has meaning and how it is used in context (Seligmann, 2012:82). It seems as if Grade 1 teachers need to take cognisance of the following six principles when facilitating the development of vocabulary, namely that s/he:

- a) selects key words, useful words, interesting words and vocabulary-building words that learners will encounter while reading literature and content material;
- b) explains words in relation to other words;
- c) helps learners to relate words to their background knowledge;
- d) introduces words in pre-reading activities to activate knowledge and use them in post-reading discussion, response and retelling;
- e) facilitates the development of words systematically and in depth; and
- f) awakens interest in and enthusiasm for words (DoE, 2008i:16).

2.2.3.4 Fluency

The Grade 1 teacher guides her/his young readers to read with confidence and to apply strategies which help to construct meaning in a text when they get stuck, when they learn to read with correct intonation, pitch, pauses and duration, with stress placed on specific syllables, a phenomenon known as 'prosodic reading' (Shriver, 2006:3; Vacca *et al.*, 2003:214). In facilitating the development of 'fluency', means that the Grade 1 teacher assists learners to go beyond merely pronouncing or knowing words, to being able to read quickly, recognise words and their meanings and say words and sentences with feeling, whilst stressing the right word or phrase so that a sentence sounds natural (DoE, 2008i:17). The teachers can enhance her/his young readers' ability to read fluently by repetition of reading texts, automaticity and predictability of reading materials (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:215-217).

2.2.3.6 Comprehension

Since reading comprehension is regarded as the essence of reading, the implication is that in developing reading comprehension a Grade 1 teacher assists her young readers to gradually understand that words and sentences communicate information by interpreting what they are reading (Shriver, 2006:3). It ensures that learners do not “bark at print” (DoE, 2008i:14; Wessels, 2010:46). In facilitating the development of ‘comprehension’, the Grade 1 teacher draws on the reader’s background knowledge in terms of how s/he applies world knowledge to understand the text literally and to draw inferences from it, depending on her/his concept development, how s/he understands words used in the text (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998:62-63,219). In so doing, the Grade 1 teacher helps the reader to monitor comprehension if s/he is able to detect inconsistencies or contradictions in the text. This term is described in detail later in this chapter (2.2.8).

2.2.4 Lower-order and higher-order reading skills

When Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills, seemingly they need to be aware that ‘reading skills’ can be categorised as lower-order or higher-order (Horner, 1972:9), with acquisition of the latter preceded by the former, also known as ‘primary skills’ (Lansdown, 1974:7-10). Both Horner (1972) and Lansdown (1974) advise that at the initial phases of reading, learners acquire the visual lower-order habits of identifying, generalising and discriminating letters, recognising sequences of letters, exercising eye movement from left to right, passing from line to line down the page, and distinguishing letters from their mirror images as in **b** and **d** and **p** and **q**.

The Grade 1 teacher may assist her/his young readers to acquire higher-order skills when they move from *mastery of reading* to *use of reading* (Lansdown, 1974:11). This happens when a young reader starts to attach meaning to what s/he is reading (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:82; Seligmann, 2012:105; Wessels, 2010:47).

The Grade 1 teacher becomes certain that her/his learners are gradually acquiring higher-order skills when they can apply those skills to read with comprehension, make inferences about what they are reading, show interest about the text they are reading and retain the information for later use. Horner (1972:9-10) wrote of the

interplay of factors such as intelligence, language experience, environment, physical and emotional factors and their impact on developing higher-order skills.

The Grade 1 teacher may also assist her/his to acquire *identification* and *interpretation* skills. The former are similar to lower-order skills, relating to the reader's ability to examine the graphic symbols on paper and to compare them to those already known in order to determine the language units that the graphic symbols represent. The latter deal with the reader's ability to derive meaning and comprehending from the graphic symbols s/he has identified (Feitelson, 1973:23-27). The way Horner (1972) and Lansdown (1974) explain the acquisition of lower-order and higher-order skills gives an impression that the acquisition of former skills must always precede the acquisition of the latter skills, implying a linear view of acquisition. However, both skills are vital for developing reading for meaning.

2.2.5 Reading for meaning

The concept 'reading for meaning' has evolved over time. In facilitating the development of reading for meaning, implies that the Grade 1 teachers assist their learners to reduce uncertainties and doubts in their young readers' minds by reducing the set of alternatives (Smith, 1971:34). They also enable them to read beyond the words to establish their significance and unstated meanings (Kurland, 2000:3; Seligmann, 2012:105). In the process, they also develop the young reader's ability to allow the imagination to take different directions and make connections between evidence so as to construct meaning of the whole text. When learners are able to read for meaning, they can recognise the symbols on a page, work out the meaning of words from her/his cultural background and experience, then make inferences about what message the author might have intended to convey (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:82; Seligmann, 2012:105; Wessels, 2010:47).

It, therefore, seems as if 'reading for meaning' is the major drive behind all reading activities in the classroom and outside the classroom. In developing the learners' reading skills, Grade 1 teachers ensures that learners can participate in literate society whether in academic, work or life settings. The implication is that Grade 1 teachers are responsible for equipping their learners with the necessary skills and strategies for constructing meaning of written language. Apparently, they can assist

their learners to read for meaning when they provide opportunities for them to construct meaning from various types of print, recognise that there are different kinds of reading materials and different purposes for reading, select strategies appropriate for different reading activities and develop a life-long interest and enjoyment in reading a variety of material for different purposes (Saskatchewan Education, 1997:1).

When teachers develop learners' ability to read for meaning they help them to read with fluency, build vocabulary, engage in guided reading and develop reading comprehension strategies (Horowitz, 2006:1-2). Hennessy (2009:2) adds that learners who read for meaning are purposeful and strategic, thoughtful about what they know about the topic, cognisant of whether or not they understand what they are reading, thoughtful about what to do if they do not understand, and are conscious about how they may apply or use information.

The facilitation of the development of reading skills also requires the Grade 1 teachers to have knowledge of four cueing systems, examined in turn as follows.

2.2.6 Cueing systems

In facilitating the development of reading skills, it seems as if the Grade 1 teachers need to be knowledgeable about the cueing systems. Although Kelly (2008:4) uses the the term 'cue-systems', it seems as if the two terms 'cue systems' and 'cueing systems' can be used interchangeably to highlight the significance of combining words and letters with prior knowledge during the reading act. Kelly (2008:4) maintains that the three cue-systems originate from the orchestration model. Saskatchewan Education (1997:2-4) and Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008:114-115) point out that 'reading for meaning' is a process by which readers show the ability to simultaneously use clues from the semantic, syntactic and graphophonic cueing systems. These originate from the 'cue-system' model, which acknowledges that young readers bring much more to reading than simply encoding and decoding letters and words. The semantic, syntactic and graphophonic cueing systems are the most popular in the development of reading for meaning. However, Hunter-Grundin (1979:8), introduces the fourth one, namely, 'pragmatic cueing system'. The following are the four cueing systems:

2.2.6.1 Semantic

The Grade 1 teacher can use the ‘semantic cueing system’ to indicate that the reader can move beyond words and letters to construct meaning. S/he works out the meaning of the difficult word by interpreting how it is used in a sentence with other words that already make sense to her/him and in the text as a whole. The reader does this by constructing meaning from the text itself while applying life experiences relating to the situation s/he is reading about and knowledge from other texts. Hunter-Grundin (1979:7) writes that the semantic cueing system presupposed not only familiarity with the words used in a text but also an understanding of concepts to which the words relate. The semantic cueing system is activated when readers read a text which deals with a familiar topic and are able to predict what is to follow. In this instance the reader uses her/his general knowledge (READ Educational Trust, 2008a:33, 34).

2.2.6.2 Syntactic

The ‘syntactic cueing system’ affords the Grade 1 teacher to allow the young readers to use their knowledge of language and grammar as well as word order rules in order to construct meaningful phrases and sentences and to develop comprehension. This system is important in making predictions about what is to follow in the text. Syntactic cues are triggered by the reader’s ability to question the text in order to ascertain the credibility and authenticity of language usage and use in the text (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:115; READ Educational Trust, 2008a:33, 34).

2.2.6.3 Graphophonic

The young reader demonstrates the use of the ‘graphophonic cueing system’ when s/he uses knowledge of language to make a link between sound-symbol, letter combinations and sight words to construct meaning. It is related to phonics, but teachers are warned that the sound-letter relationships do not necessarily help readers to obtain meaning from written texts. The ideal situation would be to develop phonics in a way that is complementary to other cueing systems (READ Educational Trust, 2008a:33, 34; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:115).

2.2.6.4 Pragmatic

The 'pragmatic cueing system' is concerned with how the Grade 1 teacher assists the reader to use knowledge about language in specific social contexts to help in understanding what the text is about. Hunter-Grundin (1979:8) refers to this type of cueing system as *situational*, and it emanates from the knowledge the reader has about the society and its culture. The reader uses the cueing systems to make meaning of the text by what Kelly (2008:4) terms the "searchlights" that correspond to the cueing systems as categorised into three levels. The first level is the **text level** (*semantic cues*), on which reading is driven by meaning construction and the context. The second level is **sentence level** (*syntactic cues*), on which readers are driven by their knowledge of grammar. The third is the **word level** (*graphophonic*), on which the focus is on phonics and graphic knowledge.

2.2.7 Schemata theory in reading for meaning

The ability to read for meaning is closely related to the schema theory, which provides a framework into how a reader understands and remembers ideas in any text by pivoting on organised knowledge (Norton, 1997:136; Seligmann, 2012:105; Vakalisa, 2011:4; Van Wyk, 2007:347; Wessels, 2010:33-34). Schemas or schemata are referred to as "cognitive constructs", "the building blocks of cognition" or the "cognitive map to the world" (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:16). The reader's schemata show the interplay of prior knowledge, experience, conceptual understanding, skills values and attitudes as s/he reads a text. They enable the reader to organise information in the long-term memory and to link new information to that already known (Cook, 1989:69; Vacca *et al.*, 2003:16; Wessels, 2007:102; Widdowson, 1983:34).

In understanding this theory, the Grade 1 teachers acknowledge the importance of the reader's ability to use prior knowledge of various types of texts (Seligmann, 2012:155-156), apply knowledge of the world and follow clues provided in the text to construct meaning (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:114-115; Norton, 1997:136-137). When Grade 1 teachers read to their learners they help them to develop schemas for story structures, vocabulary, language patterns and other forms of literary aspects. It is, therefore, important that they apply reading strategies for pre-reading activities as these will help learners to activate relevant prior knowledge necessary to fill in the gaps in knowledge before and during reading.

The Grade 1 teachers' understanding of the schemata theory, which holds that reading comprehension improves when the reader approaches text purposefully but expectantly, will also enhance their facilitative role in developing the learners' reading skills. In other words, the Grade 1 teachers will be able to assist their young readers to make use of their schemata, which provide a framework for allowing them to easily organise text, to make inferences about what s/he thinks will happen in the text, and to elaborate on the information derived from it (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:17; Wessels, 2010:34).

2.2.8 Reading comprehension

Since 'reading comprehension' is a vital higher order skill (Lansdown, 1974:11), which is aimed at comprehension of meaning that depends on the reader's ability to deal with word meanings as well as to reason with words (Dechant, 1982:288; Lapp & Flood, 1986:116; Wessels, 2010:47), implies the importance of Grade 1 teachers developing this sub-skill. In reinforcing the statement above, Dechant (1982:311) states that comprehension embraces the reader's ability to correctly associate meanings with word symbols, select correct meanings suggested by the context, organise and retain meanings, recognise structural elements comprising a sentence, and perceive the syntactic interrelationships of these elements. The Grade 1 teachers can develop their learners' reading comprehension by assisting their young readers to construct meaning from a text by using reading strategies flexibly and independently and by selecting from the language cues (Saskatchewan Education, 1997:1).

In facilitating the development of reading skills, Grade 1 teachers are expected to understand and bring to life the term 'reading comprehension' as a "complex orchestration of multiple cognitive and intentional variables, such as recognising phonological, semantic and syntactic features, while employing strategic and meta-cognitive processes" (Cartwright, 2008:50). In understanding the term 'reading comprehension', the Grade 1 teachers are in a better position to assist their learners to become aware that it is a "multilayered and multifaceted business" which portrays a highly interactive and reciprocal relationship between the author, the text and the reader as s/he tries to make her/his own meaning from the meaning the author intended to communicate (Washtell, 2008a:63). In so doing, the Grade 1 teachers

develop her/his young reader’s ability to understand the message or information communicated by words and sentences, which Hennessey (2009:1) refers to as an active process of constructing meaning from a text. As an active process, ‘reading comprehension’ requires the Grade 1 teachers to assist her/his young readers to generate questions based on the text, suggesting that teachers should ask questions that lead to more questions (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:243). While Dechant (1982:313-314) discusses six levels of reading comprehension, namely, literal, organisational, inferential, evaluative, appreciative and integrative (Table 2.1), Lapp and Flood (1986:134-136) focus on only three, namely, literal, inferential and evaluative.

According to Dechant (1982:312-314), ‘reading comprehension’ unfolds in two forms, the *lower* and the *higher*. The former relates to the association of meaning with a single word, the latter to the reader’s ability to reason with words. A prerequisite of acquiring higher forms of comprehension is for a reader to understand the organisation of words into phrases, sentences and paragraphs, to write a complete text and show movement from literal comprehension to interpretative, critical and creative reading. The four facets of comprehension are meanings of individual words, units of increasing size, levels of comprehension and application of comprehension skills Table 2.1 (below) shows four facets of comprehension.

Table 2.1: Four facets of reading comprehension

FACETS OF COMPREHENSION			
<i>Comprehending the meanings of individual words [lower form]</i>	<i>Comprehending units of increasing size [higher form]</i>	<i>Comprehending on different levels</i>	<i>Applying comprehension skills</i>
Words and vocabulary knowledge.	Phrases; Clauses; Sentence; Paragraph; Two or more successive paragraphs; Chapter or story; and Book.	1. <i>Literal</i> : identification, recognition and recall of ideas, information, or happenings explicitly stated. 2. <i>Organisational</i> : analysis and synthesis or organisation of ideas explicitly stated. 3. <i>Inferential</i> : a combination of conjecture and explanation based on a synthesis of the literal content, personal knowledge and imagination. 4. <i>Evaluative / critical reading</i> : making evaluative judgements about the content. 5. <i>Appreciative / creative</i> : awareness of the literary techniques, forms and styles of the author. 6. <i>Integrative</i> : reading for learning.	Integrative comprehending (reading for learning); Comprehending at an appropriate rate: adjusting rate or reading to fit the purpose of reading; and Comprehending in the content areas.

When one reflects on the knowledge base pertaining to the development of reading comprehension, it is a daunting undertaking for the Grade 1 teachers, and tests whether they possess content knowledge pertaining to reading comprehension in order to facilitate the development of reading skills. However, the paradox of facilitating the development of reading skills is that even those teachers who have knowledge about developing reading comprehension seldom put it to use (Pressley, 2001:31).

2.2.9 Factors affecting reading comprehension

In facilitating the development of reading skills, Grade 1 teachers need to familiarise themselves with factors affecting reading comprehension. Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998:15) assert that reading is a very complex activity, interrelated with other aspects of a child's development and influenced by certain factors. They echo the same sentiments with Jenkinson (1973:51), which underline the notion that intelligence is not the only factor that influences comprehension, but includes appropriate levels of the reader's cognitive development, language, vocabulary, motivation, and ability in concept formation. Harris and Smith (1986:226-228) identify two factors external to the reader, text and physical, which although explained as entities are interdependent in enhancing reading comprehension with five internal ones intertwined in the process of comprehension. These five are discussed in turn as follows.

2.2.9.1 Background experience

Reading becomes a laborious and painstaking activity if young readers are unable to bring personal meanings to the events and feelings in the text. The richer the background experiences of the reader the better the comprehension (Seligmann, 2012:105; Vacca *et al.*, 2003:16). A reader who has not been to the seaside will find it difficult to conceptualise and form mental schema of the sea at sunset or sunrise, or related concepts such as 'seashore', 'seafood' or 'seafaring'. This is due to lack of a frame of reference from which s/he can derive meaning (Harris & Smith 1986:229-233). Background experience or knowledge is an all-embracing term that comprises personal experience, prior formal study, socio-economic and cultural factors, the instruction received and the timing of reading instruction (Dechant, 1982:62-64;

Killen, 2010:29; Van Wyk, 2007:347). While teachers may not be in a position to ensure that all learners have the same background experience they can bridge the gap between those who have a wealth of experience and those who do not. They can do a variety of pre-listening activities that will demystify culturally-specific concepts and prevent cross-cultural interference in reading materials (Wessels, 2007:120-121).

2.2.9.2 Language factors

The Grade 1 teachers use language to develop the learners' reading skills. Inadequate language development accounts for poor reading. It is through language that the reader can associate meanings with word symbols, select correct meanings suggested by the context, organise and retain meanings, recognise structural elements comprising a sentence, and perceive the syntactic interrelationships of these elements (Dechant, 1982:41; Seligmann, 2012:21-24; Wessels, 2010:7). If the reader encounters difficult words in a text then her/his ability to attribute meaning is at stake. As a result, the reader may fail to tap on prior knowledge and may lose interest in the text.

Sometimes a reader may determine the meaning of unfamiliar words according to the context in which they have been used (Seligmann, 2012:85). Context is particularly useful because the reader is able to make specific application of the intended meaning from the clues it contains. If a reader encounters a word with a variety of meanings in a sentence the context will be helpful in identifying a relevant meaning from a variety of meanings (Harris & Smith, 1986:240-242; Seligmann, 2012:85).

2.2.9.3 Cognitive factors

In facilitating the development of reading skills, Grade 1 teachers bring to life the notion that reading is an intellectual and emotional activity of perceiving a written message across a range of thinking operations (Harris & Smith, 1986:5 & 23; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:82; Saskatchewan Education, 1997:1; Seligmann, 2012:85; Wessels, 2010:36). The learners, as young readers, come to realise that they can understand the written message they perceive and that understanding is

dependent on experience (Horner, 1972:10). To indicate that reading is an intellectual activity, Harris and Smith (1986:259-260) justifiably write about the thinking process in terms of the four operations, namely; *identifying* written ideas, *analysing* the message, *evaluating* the ideas gained from reading and *applying* the factual knowledge gained in solving problems.

On paper, these thinking operations mean nothing to the Grade 1 learners until such time that their teacher can create opportunities for them to practice them. This depends largely on the teacher's effective use of questioning technique that calls for higher-order thinking.

2.2.9.4 Affective factors

Since reading is an emotive act (Harris & Smith, 1986:5, 23; Kelly, 2008:3; Saskatchewan Education, 1997:1), teachers cannot afford to neglect the emotional aspects associated with it. This is because learners, especially in Grade 1, understand better if they read about topics that are interesting to them and is relevant when considering that the learners' attitudes and beliefs are closely related to their interests. This calls for teachers to understand the learners' background and experience and to be knowledgeable about their personality (Lapp & Flood, 1986:278). Teachers must also understand that as they develop learners' reading skills they must focus on their interest in reading – whether they will read and how much, as well as reading interests – areas in which they will read (Dechant, 1982:75).

The Grade 1 teachers can employ the four thinking operations in developing learners' affective domain in the teaching and learning environment. In *identification* learners can be asked about their feelings with regard to the text they have read. In *analysis* they can be asked to explain how and why the text affects them. In *evaluation* learners may justify their feelings in relation to the text and explain the appropriateness thereof. In *application* learners can be asked to explain the importance of certain emotions in their lives and how they can change their lives (Harris & Smith, 1986:277-278)

2.2.9.5 Text factors

The texts used by the Grade 1 teachers in facilitating the development of reading skills must have a plan which guides the reader in following the author's presentation of ideas and in locating main ideas and supporting details (Harris & Smith, 1986:282-283; Seligmann, 2012:155-156). In order to meet learners half way in this regard, teachers must select reading materials that are well-organised. The teacher must assist the reader to find relationships easily amongst ideas accompanied by examples and be able to make use of analogies provided in the plan to understand unfamiliar ideas. The plan should also include advance organisers, summaries, transition statements, and definitions of technical terms.

The books that Grade 1 teachers use in developing reading skills should meet the standards of clarity if they are to contribute to reading comprehension. The onus once more lies with the Grade 1 teacher to select those books are rich in clarity.

It seems as if Grade 1 teachers need the information above to enhance their facilitative role in the development of reading skills in Sesotho. The question that arises is whether they have this knowledge?

2.2.10 Determining reading purposes

The teachers' facilitative role in developing reading skills becomes easy if they can determine a purpose for reading, which is vital for comprehension. It is also important for teachers to realise that reading behaviour changes as the purpose changes (Harris & Smith, 1986:278; Seligmann, 2012:106). Reading for different purposes affect reading comprehension and thus have a direct bearing on the reader's ability to recall a text, speed up the retrieval of information from memory, modify reading strategies, and organise thoughts around the information, skills and strategies necessary to move them closer to a particular purpose and generate inferences (Cankaya, 2007:7).

Reading with a purpose assists readers to be focused in their search for the information being sought and therefore enables them to locate the most relevant parts of the text (Doty, 2007:2-4; Glendinning & Holmström, 1992:20; Seligmann,

2012:106-107; Saskatchewan Education, 1997:4). This can be attained using four skills, dealt with in turn as follows.

2.2.10.1 Prediction

The Grade 1 teachers use 'prediction' as a skill to enable readers to make intelligent guesses about what will happen next from what they have read in a text, using a small sample of it (Block & Duffy, 2008:22; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:116; Wessels, 2007:104; Zeiler, 1993:113). In using this skill, the teacher allows them to draw tentative conclusions about what they believe the story entails or how the plot will unfold, which they may later accept or reject (Fulmer, 2004:127). This happens easily if the reader is knowledgeable about the subject and can thus relate the samples of the new text to existing knowledge (Doty, 2007:2-4; Glendinning & Holmström, 1992:9). The reader can predict what is going to happen before and during the process of reading, thus allowing for refinement and critiquing of ideas and opinions (Washtell, 2008b:65).

2.2.10.2 Surveying

'Surveying' is a skill that can be used by teachers to enable the readers to obtain a holistic view of a text and its contents. It also depends on good sampling that provides the reader with clues as to how the text will proceed. The reader can then take another sample and refine the prediction. The ability to sample improves as the reader gains experience (Glendinning & Holmström, 1992:33).

2.2.10.3 Reading for main points

Readers need to develop a skill to read for main points. The Grade 1 teachers employ this skill, 'reading for main points' to render abstract explicitly and implicitly stated information from a text (Doty, 2007:3; Seligmann, 2012:119-120). Sampling is as important here as predicting and surveying, as readers have to know what details they are looking for and separate them from the less important ones (Glendinning & Holmström, 1992:45).

2.2.10.4 Making inferences

Readers are ‘making inferences’ when they are encouraged to use higher-order thinking skills to find information that is not explicitly stated in the text (Doty, 2007:3). In so doing, the reader is assisted to combine the information in the text with background knowledge in order to make sense of what is being read. Inferences are made when there are no cues to assist understanding (Glendinning & Holmström, 1992:55).

2.2.11 Types of reading purposes

Kurland (2000:5), Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA, 2006:5-6) and Flanagan (1995:7) point to a variety of reading purposes that may be adopted. Readers may read for personal interest and pleasure, to participate in society or to learn. Others are reading for survival (Seligmann, 2012:106; Wallace, 1993:7), reading for literary experience and reading to acquire and use information. Each of these is associated with certain types of texts, for example, reading for literary experience is often accomplished through reading fiction, while reading to acquire and use information is generally associated with informative articles and instructional texts.

2.2.11.1 Reading for pleasure

‘Reading for pleasure’ is used synonymously with reading for enjoyment, for leisure and for relaxation (Casey, 1993:24; Seligmann, 2012:106). Saskatchewan Education (1997:4) classifies this type of reading as “rapid”. Reading for pleasure cannot be forced upon learners because it is done “for its own sake”. Nonetheless, the benefits of encouraging reading for pleasure are many. It may keep learners abreast of what is happening in their life worlds and broaden their general knowledge. It is also important that learners are encouraged to read for fun in their home languages as a means of enhancing fluency, which they will need when they begin to read for learning (Wallace, 1993:7).

Reading for pleasure is an indication that the reader makes an effort to find relations among ideas and events in the text, to anticipate forthcoming text events and to show more interest in the author’s writing style (Cankaya, 2007:19). Reading for

pleasure is understood as reading for literary experience within the context of PIRLS. The literary texts that were given to learners in PIRLS were complete short stories or episodes accompanied by supportive illustrations. It was expected that learners would recognise explicitly stated detail, locate a specified part of the story and make an inference clearly suggested by it. As learners progressed to more advanced benchmarks they demonstrated more complex and demanding comprehension skills and strategies (Mullis *et al.*, 2007:78).

Reading for pleasure increasingly includes electronic messages sent to maintain and enhance personal relationships, and engage in social networking. When learners read literary texts for pleasure they demonstrate their ability to comprehend, interpret, and critique imaginative texts in every medium, drawing on personal experiences and knowledge to understand them, and recognise their social, historical and cultural features. In this instance learners are expected to read a variety of texts, identify literary elements of setting, plot, theme and point of view and compare those features to other works and to their own lives. In a Grade 1 class, the learners can read a picture book to class and point out how the pictures add meaning to the story, keep a reading inventory to show all the types of literature they have read, and retell a familiar tale or fable to class (AccelerateU, 2004:5).

In the South African context, reading for pleasure was introduced at the Foundation Phase by means of the National Reading Strategy (DoE, 2008i) and reinforced through the Foundations for Learning Campaign (Government Gazette No 30880, 2008).

2.2.11.2 Reading for learning

'Reading for learning' or 'reading to study' involves the Grade 1 teacher reading slowly and repeatedly with the aim of helping the learners to master the main ideas, facts and arguments presented by the author (Casey, 1993:2; Saskatchewan Education, 1997:4; Seligmann, 2012:106). Wallace (1993:7) further states that reading for learning is a means of acquiring new knowledge and polishing half-known facts. Readers may also read to support, consolidate and clarify ideas presented in the text, and this is not necessarily confined to the classroom. According to Cankaya (2007:53), there is a tendency for learners to recall more when they read for learning

because the process involves more repetition and paraphrasing than when they read for pleasure. At times it is necessary to read word-by-word in appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of poems or piece of literature (Casey, 1993:21). Contrary to reading for pleasure, reading for learning involves less anticipation of future text events, more attempts at integration and more rereading (Cankaya, 2007:19).

2.2.11.3 Reading for survival

The different environments in which people find themselves may present dangers which can be easily avoided if one is able to 'read for survival' (Wallace, 1993:6-7). For instance, a motorist approaching an area with a warning sign that states that it is a "high accident zone" will be expected to drive more cautiously in that area. Sometimes it is a matter of life-and-death to be able to read leaflets accompanying equipment, toys or medication in order to avoid unnecessary accidents.

2.2.11.4 Reading to acquire and use information

'Reading to acquire and use information' goes beyond paging through a telephone directory looking for a telephone number or through the *Yellow Pages* looking for a specific service provider. It goes beyond following step-by-step instructions of a recipe or reading instructions of how to operate a cellular phone. When a reader is expected to locate and reproduce information that is explicitly stated, readily accessible and in a clearly defined section, the reader may scan the text. *Scanning* is when the readers can swiftly and efficiently extract data that they require from written texts, without reading every word (Glendinning & Holmström, 1992:9; Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1997:163; Saskatchewan Education, 1997:4; Seligmann, 2012:112; Wessels, 2007:150-151). *Skimming*, on the other hand, demonstrates the readers' ability to glance over the text hastily and superficially and understand the gist of the matter in order to determine if it is worth reading (Kilfoil & Van der Walt 1997:163; Saskatchewan Education, 1997:4; Seligmann, 2012:108; Wessels, 2007:149).

In reading to acquire and use information, the reader learns about the real world and how to use the acquired information in reasoning and in action. Informational texts may be ordered *chronologically* or *logically*, or may be *expository*. Sometimes information may not be in the form of continuous text. When readers look for ideas in informational texts that are *chronologically* ordered they will realise they are

presented as a sequence ordered in time, such as diaries, letters and autobiographies. Recipes and instructions are procedural texts, set out as stages to be followed towards completion and also based on sequence.

Texts that are *logically* organised present ideas and information as arguments and counter-arguments and as viewpoints with supporting evidence, as in research papers or editorials. Those informational texts that explain or describe people, events, or things are *expository*. Brochures, lists, diagrams, charts, graphs, advertisements and announcement are examples of texts which present ideas that are not in a continuous form, and call in different ways for the reader to act upon the information acquired (Mullis *et al.*, 2007:19-20).

2.2.11.5 Critical reading / reading for evaluation

In 'critical reading', the teachers encourage readers to challenge, interrogate and make judgments on the text. They can either accept or reject the ideas presented by the author based on their knowledge of the subject under discussion (Casey, 1993:22; Seligman, 2012:120; Saskatchewan Education, 1997:4). As Dechant (1982:313,331) writes, critical reading stretches beyond literal comprehension that merely requires the identification, recognition and recall of ideas, information, or happenings explicitly stated in the text. It is a search for contradictory material while relating it to personal experience, distinguishing fact from fiction or opinion, being concerned with the timeliness of the material and trying to understand the author's motives. Critical reading means being sensitive to the author's language use and being suspicious of bias and errors of reasoning, of analogy, of overgeneralisation and distortion. This thoroughness is possible as critical reading is not hurried, but rather needs time for the reader to go through the text slowly, purposefully and analytically.

Harris and Smith (1986:302), without refuting any of the statements above, indicate that they prefer to use the term 'reading for analysis and evaluation' rather than critical reading. Their argue that this falls within the domain of higher-level comprehension activity. Readers can be critical when they have knowledge of the field in which the reading is being done, an attitude of questioning and suspended judgement. A reader can analyse experiences, ideas, information and issues by

using evaluative criteria from a variety of perspectives. In this case learners are expected to read and form opinions about a variety of informational and literary texts, make decisions about the quality and dependability of texts and experiences and evaluate their own strategies for reading critically. This can be achieved when the learners read several versions of a familiar fairy tale and recognise the differences in the versions. For example, this happens when a reader can point out examples of false advertising on television and for toys, and differentiate between so-called facts and opinions in a feature article in a children's magazine (AccelerateU, 2004:8-9).

2.2.11.6 Reflective thoughts

Although this reading purpose was not emphasised in PIRLS (especially for Foundation Phase learners), critical reading featured predominantly when learners responded to literary and informational texts within the high and the advanced international benchmarks. For instance, they were supposed to begin to examine and evaluate story structure (literary text), begin to understand textual elements, such as metaphors and author's point of view, integrate information across a text to sequence activities and fully justify preferences (informational texts).

Since the critical outcomes in the NCS give prominence to critical thinking, this serves to highlight the significance of this reading purpose. Teachers are thus expected to strive continually towards developing their learners' critical thinking in all teaching and learning environments. Critical Outcome 1 and 4 clearly state that learners must be able to "identify and solve problems and make decisions using *critical and creative thinking*". Critical Outcome 4 envisages learners who will be able to "collect, analyse, organise and *critically evaluate* information". Some of the learning outcomes also underline the development of critical thinking for example Learning Outcome 3: Reading and Viewing, states that the learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and *respond critically* to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts [*italics my emphasis*].

2.3 READING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENT (NCS)

Since the NCS pivots on OBE, with the outcomes representing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to be achieved by the learners at the end of the process, the Grade 1 teachers planned the outcomes to encourage learners to be actively involved in their own learning and enhance an activity-based approach to education. The NCS focuses on different types of outcomes, namely; the critical, developmental and learning. Each of these outcomes will be discussed briefly in the next sections.

2.3.1 Critical Outcomes

The Critical Cross-Field/Essential Outcomes were first described as broad statements of intended results of education and training underpinned by transformational mechanisms of post-apartheid South Africa. They are generic and cross-curricular and form the basis of the teaching and learning process, focusing on the capacity to apply knowledge, skills and attitudes in an integrated way (DoE, 1997:10-12). These Critical Cross-Field Outcomes were later referred to as the critical and developmental outcomes (DoE, 2002a:4). In the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools) POLICY OVERVIEW English (DoE, 2002a:11) the critical and developmental outcomes are formulated on the basis of the fundamental values of the South African Constitution reflected in the aim of the education and training system. The aim of education was to ensure that all South African learners will be “embued with the values and act in the interests of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice” (DoE, 1997:10-12).

The Critical Outcomes envisage learners who will be able to:

- CO 1:** identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking (*ho hlwaya le ho rarolla diqaka mme ba etse diqeto ka ho sebedisa ho nahana ka tshekatsheko le boiqapelo bo tebileng*);
- CO 2:** work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organization and community (*sebetsa ka katleho le ba bang sehlopheng, mokgatlong le setjhabeng*);

- CO 3:** organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively (*itlhophisa, ho itaola le ho laola mesebetsi ya bona kapa seo ba se etsang ka boikarabelo le ka bokgoni*);
- CO 4:** collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information (*bokella, ho manolla, ho hlophisa le ho hlahloba tlhahisoleseding ka tshehollo*);
- CO 5:** communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and / or language skills in various modes (*buisana ka katleho ka tshebediso ya ditshwantsho/ tse bohuwang, matshwao kapa bokgoni ba puo ka mekgwa e fapaneng*);
- CO 6:** use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others (*sebedisa mahlale/saense le theknoloji ka katleho mme ka kelohlolo ba bontshe boikarabelo malebana le tikeloho le bophelo ho ba bang*); and
- CO 7:** demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation (*bontsha kutlwisiso ya lefatshe jwalo ka sete ya tsamaiso tse amanang ka ho lemoha hore maemo a ho rarolla diqaka, ha a sebetse a le mang jwaloka sehlekehleke* (DoE, 2002b:1-2; DoE, 2002c:1-2).

When Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills, they are supposed to be consciously focussing on helping learners to achieve the critical outcomes. However, there is evidence that Foundation Phase learners are not able to read effectively and it seems as if the teachers do not effectively integrate the critical outcomes when they were facilitating the development of reading skills.

2.3.2 Developmental Outcomes

The Developmental Outcomes envisage learners who will be able to:

- DO 1:** reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively (*nahana le ho batlisisa mefuta e fapaneng ya mawa a ho ithuta ka katleho*);
- DO 2:** participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities (*ba le seabo jwalo ka baahi ba nang le boikarabelo, bophelong ba setjhaba sa selehae, sa naha, le ditjhabeng tsa lefatshe lohle*);
- DO 3:** be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts (*ba hlokolosi botjhabeng le bokgabaneng ba bonono maemong a fapaneng a phedisano*);

DO 4: explore education and career opportunities (*batlisisa menyetla ya thuto le mesebetsi*); and

DO 5: develop entrepreneurial opportunities (*ho ntshetsapele menyetla ya tsa kgwebo*) (DoE, 2002b:2; DoE, 2002c:2).

In facilitating the development of reading skills, the Sesotho speaking Grade 1 teachers are supposed to bear in mind that each learner is unique. In so doing, the teachers would be required to use a variety of strategies to facilitate the development of reading skills.

2.3.3 Learning Outcomes

The Learning Outcomes are the culmination of the entire range of learning experiences and capabilities that underlie reading, occurring in a performance context that directly influences what reading is and how it is carried out. They are the results of learning processes and are future-oriented, publicly defined, focused on life skills and context and are characterised by high expectations of and for all learners. Built on the Critical Outcomes and the Developmental Outcomes, they are accompanied by Assessment Standards. The latter describe the depth and breadth of what is expected of learners to know and to be able to do and are described together with examples of texts that can be used for integrated learning in all Learning Areas (DoE, 2002b:1-2).

There is a definite purpose why reading is coupled with viewing in Learning Outcome 3. In a high technological world, learners are exposed to a variety of texts, ranging from oral, written and multimedia, thus it is necessary not only to understand written texts but also visual imagery if they are to make sense of the world around them (DoE, 2002b:11). Wallace (1993:24) and Vacca *et al.* (2003:66) maintains that people are always surrounded by texts, which they refer to as 'environmental print'. For instance, most children in urban areas can understand the meaning attached to the colours of the traffic lights and most can differentiate between a hot and cold by the colour. They can identify logos of fast food outlets and clothing labels, and interpret advertisements for children's films by cinematic or photographic excerpts, without any letter or word recognition. The more children are exposed to new technology, the more advanced levels of reading ability are required to enable them

to access and use information (Pretorius & Machet, 2004:46). Teachers need to tap on this facility in order to maximise the development of reading.

The Learning Outcomes are formulated in such a way that they give specific focus to particular kinds of knowledge and skills to be taught to the learners. The Learning Outcomes for Languages Learning Area are stated as follows:

LO 1: Listening: “The learner will be able to listen for information and enjoyment, and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations”. (*Moithuti o kgona ho mamela ho fumana tlhahiso leseding, boithabiso le ho arabela ka tshwanelo le ka tshekatsheko e tebileng maemong a fapaneng*).

LO 2: Speaking: “The learner will be able to communicate confidently and effectively in spoken language in a wide range of situations”. (*Moithuti o kgona ho buisana ka boitshepo le nepahalo ka puo e buuwang maemong a fapaneng*).

LO 3: Reading and Viewing: “The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts”. (*Moithuti o kgona ho bala le ho boha hore a fumane tlhahiso leseding le boithabiso, hore a arabele ka bohlokolosi ho bokgabane ba botjhaba le ba maikutlo ditemeng tsa ho ithuta*).

LO 4: Writing: “The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes”. (*Moithuti o kgona ho ngola ditema tse fapaneng tsa dintlha le tsa boiqapelo ka merero (dipheo) e mengata e phatlalletseng*).

LO 5: Thinking and Reasoning: “The learner will be able to use language to think and reason, as well as to access, process and use information for learning”. (*Moithuti o tla kgona ho sebedisa puo ho nahana, ho fana ka mabaka, ho fumana, ho hlophisa le ho sebedisa tlhahiso leseding ho ithuteng*).

LO 6: Language Structure and Use: “The learner will know and be able to use the sounds, words and grammar of the language to create and interpret texts”. (*Moithuti o a tseba mme o kgona ho sebedisa medumo, mantswe le thutapuo ho bopa le ho hlalosa ditema*) (DoE, 2002b:6-7; DoE, 2002c:8).

The Learning Outcomes reflect the functionalistic view of language acquisition that reading is one of the four basic language skills. Although the Learning Outcomes

appear as separate entities in terms of the sequence of numbering and acquisition, it is not the same when they are presented in the development of reading. The ideal situation would be to integrate them when they are being developed and assessed (DoE, 2002b:6). Reading, as a language skill, needs to be developed and enhanced in the teaching and learning situation. It occurs in situations in which learning is organised formally, systematically and coherently to ensure maximum development.

In an attempt to forge a relationship between reading as a language skill and as a learning outcome, the two cannot be viewed differently or separately. The relationship between reading as a skill and as a learning outcome cements the development of reading in the classroom. *Learning Outcome 3*, coupled with assessment standards, focuses on the development of reading (DoE, 2002b:11), hence it is of utmost importance that the foundation laid for the development of reading can stand the test of time and that it is done correctly the first time.

2.3.4 Assessment Standards

Since Assessment Standards describe the minimum level, depth and breadth of the knowledge, skills and attitudes which learners are supposed to acquire in a specific grade, they can be integrated within and across the grades. They serve as indicators to teachers of how learners can achieve the outcomes in each specific Learning Area (DoE, 2002a:14). In order to help learners to achieve *Learning Outcome 3* (Reading and Viewing), Grade 1 teachers need to look for evidence that learners can demonstrate the ability to use visual cues to make meaning, role-play reading, make meaning of written texts, recognise letters and words and make meaning of written text, develop phonic awareness, and read for information and enjoyment (DoE, 2002b:32, 34, 36, 38; DoEc, 2002:36, 38, 40). Several of these abilities correspond to the reading skills described in the literature and discussed earlier on in this chapter. The following Assessment Standards (Maemo a tekolo) exemplify different types of abilities.

2.3.4.1 Use visual cues to make meaning (*ho sebedisa temoso tsa ditshwantsho ho fana ka moelelo*)

The teacher facilitates learning to enable each learner to:

- a) predict from the cover of a book what a story is all about (*ho noha ka ho tadima bokantle ba buka, ebe o lepa seo buka e buang ka sona*);

- b) use illustrations to interpret the meanings of stories and tell a story, (*ho sebedisa ditshwantsho ho hlalosa moelelo wa dipale mme a pheta dipale*); and
- c) interpret information including simple tables and graphical images found in print, media and advertising such as calendars, and rosters, HIV/AIDS posters (*ho toloka tlhahisoleseding ho kenyelletswa manane le ditshwantsho tsa dikerafo tse bonolo tse fumanwang mongolong, diphatlalatsing tse ngotsweng tse jwalo ka dialemanaka le manane a bontshang dinako le diphousetara tsa HIV/AIDS*).

In considering this Assessment Standard when facilitating the development of reading skills, the Grade 1 teachers would be assisting their learners to read for meaning (Chapter 2:2.2.5).

2.3.4.2 Role-plays reading (*ho tshwantsha ketsahalo ya ho bala*)

The teacher facilitates learning to enable each learner to:

- a) hold the book the right way up (*ho tshwara buka ka nepo e shebile hodimo*);
- b) turn pages appropriately (*ho phetla maqephe ka nepo*);
- c) look at words and pictures (*ho sheba mantswa le ditshwantsho*); and
- d) use pictures to construct ideas (*ho sebedisa ditshwantsho ho bopa dikgopolo*).

In considering this Assessment Standard, the readers are encouraged to use the cueing system in order to construct meaning from the printed message (Chapter 2:2.2.6).

2.3.4.3 Make meaning of written texts (*ho bopa moelelo wa ditema tse ngotsweng*)

The teacher facilitates learning to enable each learner to:

- read a story with the teacher and (*ho bala pale le titjhere mme ebe o*): discuss the main idea (*buisana ka mohopolo wa sehlooho*);
- identify the details, e.g. main characters, sequence of events, setting (*ho lemoha dintlhakgolo ka botlalo jk. baphetwa ba sehlooho, tatellano ya diketsahalo, tikoloho*); and
- say whether the story was liked and why (*ho bolela hore e be o ratile pale, le hore hobaneng a realo*).

The last bullet above underlines the fact that reading is a cognitive-affective process whereby the reader understands the printed message and that message evokes some emotions (Chapter 2:2.2.2).

2.3.4.4 Recognise letters and words and makes meaning of written texts (*ho lemoha ditlhaku le mantswa, a bile a bopa moelelo wa tema e ngotsweng*)

The teacher facilitates learning to enable each learner to:

- a) read simple written material e.g. labels, stories etc. (*ho bala ntho tse ngotsweng habonolo jk. mabitso a dintho, dipale jj.*);
- b) read own writing and the writing of classmates (*ho bala mongolo wa hae le wa ba bang ka phaposing*);
- c) use phonic and word recognition skills to decode new or unfamiliar words in context e.g. visual cues like shape of word and letter patterns, picture clues, context clues and letter-sound relationship (*ho sebedisa bokgoni ba ho elellwa modumo le mantswa a matjha le a sa tlwaelehang ditemeng jk. Bokgoni ba ditemoso tsa ditshwantsho tse jalo ka sebopeho sa mantswa, dipaterone tsa ditlhaku, ditemoso tsa ditema tse bohawang, le kamano pakeng tsa tlhaku le modumo*).

In reading simple written materials, the learners are encouraged to practice their word identification and recognition skills in order to understand the stories they read with the teachers (Chapter 2:2.2.3.2).

2.3.4.5 Develop phonic awareness (*ho ntshetsapele tlhokomediso ya medumo*)

The teacher facilitates learning to enable each learner to:

- a) recognise and name letters of the alphabet (*ho hlokomela le ho bolela mabitso a ditlhaku tsa nteterwane*);
- b) understand the difference between letter names letter sounds (*ho utlwisisa kamano e teng pakeng tsa tlhaku le modumo wa yona*);

- c) segment simple words into syllables with a CVCV pattern and rime [sic] in the last syllable (*ho arola mantswe a bonolo ho ya ka dinoko tsa ona, a bontsha paterone ya CVCV le raeme senokong se qetellang jk. du-ma* (sound of thunder), *lo-ma* (to bite), *le se-ha* (to slice/cut), *ha-ha* (to build).
- d) group common words into word families e.g., fat, cat, mat, mat, hat (*ho hlophisa mantswe a tlwaelehileng ho ya ka paterone e tshwanang ya medumo jk. hama* (to milk), *hata* (to step on), *ema* (to stop), *epa* (to dig).
- e) recognise two letter blends at the beginning of words (*ho lemoha ditumammoho tse bopilweng ka ditlhaku tse pedi qalong ya mantswe jk. thuso* (help), *tsamaya* (to go).
- f) recognise common consonant digraphs i.e., single sounds spelt with two letters at the end of words e.g. gh (though), ch (church) (*ho lemoha ditumammoho tse bopilweng ka ditlhaku tse pedi qetellong ya mantswe jk. ts* ho sebetsa (to work) le **ph** ho hlompha (to respect).
- g) to recognise some high-frequency sight words such as the, a, to, my, your, like and including own name and print in the environment (*ho hlokomela mantswe a sebediswang kgafetsa jwaloka wena* (you), *yena* (she/he), *a kenyelletsa le lebitso la hae, le seo a se boning se ngotswe tikolohong eo a phelang ho yona*).

In observing this Assessment Standard, the reader is able to showcase understanding of the components of developing reading skills (Chapter 2:2.2.3).

2.3.4.6 Read for information and enjoyment (ho balla tsebo le boithabiso)

The teacher facilitates learning to enable each learner to:

- a) read for information and enjoyment (*ho bala dibuka tsa ditshwantsho le tse nang le dihlooho tse bonolo*).

Some of the examples of the fifth *Assessment Standard*, to develop phonic awareness (*ho ntshetsapele tlhokomelo ya medumo*), which are peculiar to English orthography, were not included above. For instance the AS, segments simple words with single initial consonants and short vowels with a CVC pattern e.g., fat (*nona*), are not prevalent in Sesotho. This is in contrast with the Sesotho syllable structure depicting a CVCV pattern, e.g., *nona* (to become fat). The examples of Sesotho

words with a CVC pattern are variations of the syllable pattern e.g., *teng* (available/ fine) and *mang* (who/which one) in the following sentences:

Ke teng (I am available/ I am fine).

Ke mang ya tsamaileng? (Who has just left? / Which one has just left?)

The digraphs in Sesotho, always represent a phoneme e.g. **ts**. However, the Sesotho phonemes seldom represent a syllable on their own, except in variant cases such as **n** in the word *ntate* (father) **n**+ta+te. They must appear with a vowel to represent a syllable e.g. **tsa**-ma-ya (to go). The occurrence of silent vowel **e** as in *cake* is also scarce, may be non-existent, in Sesotho.

2.3.4.7 Reflective thoughts

The Grade 1 teachers are faced with a major challenge in improving their learners' reading skills. The following questions remain: Do they understand how the critical outcomes, learning outcomes and assessments influence their facilitative role in the development of reading skills? Are they knowledgeable, dedicated and motivated enough to improve the learners' reading skills in becoming confident, independent and literate lifelong learners (DoE, 2002b:3)? How will Grade 1 teachers ensure that the outcomes will be achieved? Do Grade 1 teachers have a clear understanding of what the critical, developmental, learning and lesson outcomes mean and their significance to the teaching practice? Do they understand the interrelatedness between the outcomes and the assessment standards as they help to actualise the learners' reading potential?

The teachers' main task is to develop and advance the learners' basic literacy skills, a challenge that Naledi Pandor, the third Minister of Education after 1994, held out to Foundation Phase educators with regard to their task to provide quality education within the foundation-phase grades (Polity, 2008). In reflecting on the challenge above, a further question that arises is how the minister of education intended to support, guide and motivate the teachers to perform that task and how the teachers prepared themselves to do so.

2.4 READING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROGRESS IN INTERNATIONAL READING LITERACY STUDY

Since South African learners performed very poorly in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006, the report points to valuable lessons for Foundation Phase teachers. In reflecting on the report, some meaningful insights into understanding the concept 'reading' emerge which are instrumental in charting the way forward to improve the literacy levels amongst South African Sesotho-speaking learners. The improvements might curb unnecessary failure and the dropout syndrome common in South African schools (Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA), 2006:7).

Campbell, Kelly, Mullis, Martin and Sainsbury (2001:3) write that in the PIRLS framework for literacy the combination of the concepts 'literacy' and 'reading' succinctly capture the reader's ability to reflect on what is being read and how to use the information obtained as a means of achieving personal and societal goals. The PIRLS framework aligns itself with the notion of reading as a constructive and interactive process in which the reader constructs meaning. The meaning constructed involves conscious understanding of the text, reflecting on it and being able to read a variety of texts for different purposes (CEA, 2006:4-5).

2.4.1 Aspects of reading literacy under PIRLS

PIRLS recognised many of the concepts relevant for understanding reading, as discussed in this chapter (2.2.8; 2.2.11). In order to authenticate the assessment process in PIRLS and to give a holistic view of learner performance the focus was on three aspects, dealt with in turn as follows.

2.4.1.1 *Processes of comprehension*

'Processes of comprehension' give an indication of how readers construct meaning from a text as they read specific ideas, make inferences, interpret and integrate information, while simultaneously examining its features. In their attempts to retrieve explicitly stated information, learners must demonstrate an understanding of what is stated in the text as well as validate the relationship between the information in it and that being sought. In making inferences, learners are supposed to read beyond the

explicitly stated information in the text and add their own meanings as they ‘read between the lines’. In interpreting and integrating information, learners could attach local or global meanings to the text or relate the details to broader themes and ideas. Lastly, learners have to reflect and give a critical interpretation of the text (CEA, 2006:5-6).

2.4.1.2 Purposes of reading

Reading for meaning is always guided by specific purposes (Seligmann, 2012:106). For PIRLS 2006, two reading purposes were selected, namely reading for enjoyment and reading to acquire and use information. When readers become engaged in texts which involve them in fictitious events, settings, consequences, characters, atmosphere, feelings and ideas, and they enjoy the beauty of language, then they read for literary experience. Readers understand and appreciate literary texts by incorporating their experiences, feelings and appreciation of language and literary forms (CEA, 2006:5-6).

2.4.1.3 Reading behaviours

‘Reading behaviours’ or ‘reading attitudes’ relate to interaction between reader and the text to construct meaning, and to use knowledge, skills and cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies (CEA, 2006:5). These are fundamental in improving the development of reading skills at Grade 1, so teachers are expected to be well-grounded in them.

2.4.2 PIRLS International Benchmarks in reading performance

The Grades 4 and 5 South African learners participated in PIRLS 2006, being assessed against their contemporaries from forty countries around the world. Their performance was measured in accordance with international benchmarks on the basis of four points on the scale:

1. Low International Benchmark - 400 points
2. Intermediate International Benchmark - 475 points
3. High International Benchmark - 550 points
4. Advanced International Benchmark - 625 points.

The benchmarks were designed on the basis of three aspects of reading literacy and represent the range of performance demonstrated by learners at international level. They also described the comprehension skills and strategies, as well as four example items (two literary and two informational) shown by learners (Mullis *et al.*, 2007:67- 68, 78).

2.4.2.1 Low International Benchmark

In order to reach the Low International Benchmark, learners were expected to read literary texts by demonstrating the ability to recognise an explicitly stated detail and to locate a specified part of the story and make inference clearly suggested by the text.

In reading informational texts within the Low International Benchmark, learners were expected to show the ability to locate and reproduce explicitly stated information that is readily accessible and begin to provide a straightforward inference clearly suggested by the text (Mullis *et al.*, 2007:80).

2.4.2.2 Intermediate International Benchmark

In the Intermediate International Benchmark, learners were expected to read the literary texts and be able to identify central events, plot sequence, and relevant story details, make straightforward inferences about the attributes, feelings, and motivations of main characters, begin to make connections across parts of the texts. When reading informational texts, learners indicated that they could locate and reproduce one or two pieces of information from within the text, make straightforward inferences to provide straightforward inferences to provide information from a single part of the text, use subheadings, textboxes, and illustrations to locate parts of the text (Mullis *et al.*, 2007:86).

2.4.2.3 High International Benchmarks

When learners that operated on this level, reading literary texts, they could locate relevant episodes and distinguish significant details embedded across the text, make inferences to explain relationships between intentions, actions, events, and feelings, and give text-based support, recognise some use of textual features, begin to interpret and integrate story events and character actions across the text.

As they read informational texts, learners showed the ability to recognise and use a variety of organisational features to locate and distinguish relevant information, make inferences based on abstract or embedded information, integrate information across a text to recognise main ideas and provide explanations, integrate information across a text to give a preference and a reason for it and begin to understand textual elements, such as metaphors and author's point of view (Mullis *et al.*, 2007:92).

2.4.2.4 Advanced International Benchmarks

When learners that operated on this level, read literary texts, they were able to integrate ideas across a text to provide interpretations of a character's traits, intentions, and feelings, and provide full text-based support, interpret figurative language and begin to examine and evaluate story structure.

As these learners read informational texts, they demonstrated the ability to distinguish and interpret complex information from different parts of text, and provide full text-based support, understand the function of organisational features, integrate information across a text to sequence activities and fully justify preferences (Mullis *et al.*, 2007:99).

The PIRLS 2006 Report indicates that only 22% of South African learners achieved the Low International Benchmark; 13% proceeded to the Intermediate International Benchmark; 6% achieved the High International Benchmark; and only 2% reached the Advanced International Benchmark (Mullis *et al.*, 2007: 69). This bodes poorly for the quality of Foundation Phase education and poses a challenge to every role player in the country as to what contributions need to be made in improving the reading performance of Grade 1 learners.

2.4.2.5 Reflective thoughts

It should, however, be indicated that some discrepancies were noted which undermine the true reflection of the whole exercise. The greatest flaw within PIRLS 2006 was in the translation of the test materials into the 11 official languages in South Africa. As a result, learners experienced some difficulties in recognising technical terms used in the informational passages that reflected Euro-American beliefs, values, language and history. As the team of translators attempted to translate the English expressions, original meaning tended to be lost. In some cases

it was difficult even to describe the term to the translator (CEA, 2006:10). That the texts provided to the South Africa learners were not clearly understood by many learners does not however negate the benefits and advantages of their having been part of this international reading event. There are many lessons to be learnt from this enriching experience for all the language teachers, Department of Education, the government and broader community.

The irony of the situation is that in the Systemic Evaluations, learners were provided with texts that were typically South African and within their understanding, e.g., *The Power of Love*, *Fun day at Madiba Primary School* and *My Beautiful Body*. Despite the familiarity of texts provided to them, most learners were still unable to summarise what they had learnt from the stories. This can, perhaps be attributed to lack of understanding (DoE, 2005:4, 6, 7, 12).

The most important lesson is that Grade 1 teachers need this information so that they can be well prepared for the challenge of improving their facilitative role in the development of their learners' reading skills.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter illustrated the complexity of the concept of reading, an understanding of which unravels other related concepts, such as reading processes, the five components of developing reading skills, reading for meaning, reading comprehension and reading purposes. The complexity is further demonstrated in the way it is interpreted in the NCS. The PIRLS 2006 and the Systemic Evaluation 2001 and 2007 reports provided evidence of poor reading levels of primary school learners and accelerated the impetus to improve Foundation Phase learners' reading skills. The understanding of the concept of reading provides a framework for preparing the Grade 1 teachers to understand their facilitative role in the development of reading skills.

The next chapter focuses on the reading approaches that can be used in facilitating the development of reading skills.

CHAPTER 3

READING APPROACHES AT THE FOUNDATION PHASE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The greatest challenge, amongst many, facing Grade 1 teachers today, is to effectively develop learners' reading skills. In the face of this challenge, several questions arise: What is the Grade 1 teachers' knowledge base pertaining to the concept 'reading'? What reading approaches, strategies and skills do they use to facilitate the development of reading skills? How prepared are they to improve the development of their learners' reading skills? Are they motivated and willing to improve the development of the learners' reading skills? The answers to these questions, will hopefully clarify how Grade 1 teachers are currently facilitating the development of reading skills and inform decisions on how to assist them to improve their facilitative role.

Since Grade 1 teachers face a challenge to improve learners reading skills, the PIRLS 2006 Report has served as a backdrop against which the teachers' facilitative role in the development of reading skills can be understood and improved. Mullis *et al.* (2007:9-10) state that teachers from the countries that performed well in PIRLS 2006, frequently asked learners to use a variety of reading approaches, strategies and skills. They asked their learners to identify main ideas, support understanding with evidence from the text, compare reading with their own experiences, make generalisations and draw inferences. Perhaps there is a need to orientate the Grade 1 Sesotho teachers in some of the Mangaung schools to the different reading approaches, strategies and methods and how they influence their facilitative role in the development of reading skills.

This chapter discusses different reading approaches, demonstrates their evolution and gauges their impact on the development of reading skills. Although in much of the literature the term *teaching reading* is used, in this study the terms *developing* and *facilitating the development of* reading skills, are preferred. The term *facilitating*

takes prominence in the development of reading skills as a result of the implementation of the NCS with emphasis on OBE. It reflects the paradigm shift from the role of a teacher as transmitter of knowledge to facilitator of learners acquiring knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. S/he now assists learners to construct their own meanings as they read and serve as role model in the process of reading.

3.2 READING APPROACHES AND METHODS

The Grade 1 teacher's approach to developing reading indicates how s/he plans to achieve the goals and objectives of literacy curriculum (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:44). In order to achieve the above, s/he needs a combination of methods which Jacobs (2011:156) describes as procedures used by a teacher to help her/his learners to acquire knowledge and skills according to a specific plan. Although some authors (Carrilo, 1976:15; Dechant, 1982:181) use the terms 'approach' and 'method' interchangeably, this study explores the *alphabet, phonics, look-and-say, language-experience*, and *text-based* approaches together with the methods that can be used in conjunction with those approaches.

Of the various reading approaches that may be taken by teachers to achieve the stated aims and objectives in developing their learners' reading skills, Grade 1 teachers using Sesotho HL and as LoLT can select and adopt those that match the style of their teaching (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:44). The complexity of facilitating the development of reading skills is such that no single approach is ideal for all teachers and their learners (Flanagan, 1995: xv; Harris & Smith, 1986:383), with some approaches yielding satisfactory results, others not, and those considered effective in one context proving ineffective in others. Lapp and Flood (1986:235-243) make a distinction between *sequential* and *spontaneous* approaches. The implication is that the Grade 1 teachers who use Sesotho as LoLT need to take into cognisance that the former emphasise methods of decoding followed by comprehension, with the beginner acquiring major skills in a logical and prescribed order. They need to be aware that the latter focus on reading for meaning from the beginning, encouraging them to integrate the cognitive and affective factors of their learners whilst embracing their interests, needs and cultural backgrounds. This distinction will be explored when discussing methods employed in each approach.

The Grade 1 teachers may use *traditional* or *contemporary* reading approaches (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:44-47). While the former are characterised by methods of repetition and rote memorisation in developing reading skills, the latter encourage reading for meaning and comprehension and may integrate several methods. It is important, however, to note that the advent of each approach was influenced by a specific learning theory, usually intended as an improvement on the previous one. The rationale behind improvement is evidence of the dynamic and ever-changing circumstances in which Grade 1 teachers, who use Sesotho as a LoLT, find themselves. Since Grade 1 teachers facilitate learning, they are expected to incorporate *contemporary* approaches and methods into their teaching practice to perform their facilitative roles more effectively (Wessels, 2007:29).

Amongst the most significant approaches to developing reading are the *alphabet*, *phonics*, *look-and-say*, *language-experience*, and *text-based*, to be discussed in turn in this section. Dechant (1982:181-199) makes a distinction between *synthetic*, *analytic* and *analytic-synthetic* methods to developing reading. The *synthetic* originates from young readers combining or synthesising letters, sounds and syllables to form words (Carrillo, 1976:19), examples being found in the *alphabet*, *phonic*, and *syllable* methods. Meanwhile, the *analytic* methods are known as such because teachers develop reading by first emphasising the word, phrase and sentence and then breaking down these units into their basic elements. The combination of the *synthetic* and *analytic* methods to developing reading is known as *analytic-synthetic* or *eclectic* method. According to Dechant (1982:199), these are a synthesis of the three basic whole-word approaches, the *configuration*, the *linguistic*, and the *visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and tactile* (VAKT) as presented in the table below:

Table 3.1: Different approaches and methods of developing reading (Dechant, 1982:184)

Methods Following Synthetic Approach	Methods Following Analytic Approach	Methods Following Synthetic-Analytic / Eclectic Approach
<p><i>The Alphabet</i> Young readers spell out each new word, memorising the letters and gradually proceeding toward the word and the sentence.</p>	<p><i>The Word / Phrase</i> This method is referred to as whole-word phonics. The emphasis here is to teach young readers to read by focussing on the total word and then breaking it into its basic elements, while emphasising sound or phonics.</p>	<p>Combination of <i>sight-configuration, linguistic and kinaesthetic-tactile</i></p> <p><i>Sight-configuration</i> Young readers are taught to identify words through their general shape and configuration, emphasising the word's length and its shape, configuration and physiognomy.</p>
<p><i>The Synthetic phonic</i> Young readers starts by learning the sounds represented by the letters towards the sounding of the consonant-vowel and vowel-consonant combinations and ultimately to words.</p>	<p><i>The Sentence</i> Teachers encourage young readers to read by focussing on language structures exemplified in a sentence such as intonation, word and sentence order, grammatical inflections and certain key function words.</p>	<p><i>Linguistic</i> The focus here is on harmonisation of variant linguistic approaches, that is meaningful patterns and the reading of total language structures. This extends to acknowledging that teaching reading has to come down to the level of individual word identification and the association of letter and sound patterns.</p>
<p><i>The Syllable</i> Young readers are taught to combine syllables in order to form words.</p>	<p><i>The Story or Language-experience</i> The focus of this method lies on how young readers read, rather than how they identify words.</p>	<p><i>Kinaesthetic-tactile</i> The focus here is on teaching young readers to look at the word, sound it, form a mental picture of it and write it from memory with their eyes shut.</p>

3.2.1 Alphabet approach

One of the earliest approaches used for developing reading skills (Dechant, 1982:181; Horner, 1972:2; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:89; Kelly, 2008:6; Lapp & Flood, 1986:233), the *alphabet* was used to teach learners to read merely by seeing letters, and hearing sounds and words, but it reduced reading to a boring mechanical procedure (Carrilo, 1976:20; Kelly, 2008:6; Lansdown, 1974:35; Wessels & Van den Berg, 1999:232). Traditionally, reading was developed purely as an oral skill, with emphasis on aspects such as pitch, stress, enunciation, gesticulation, memorisation and recitation. Teachers developed in children the names of the letters of the

alphabet and ways to spell out their combinations. With its heavy reliance on memorisation and recitation it was mainly behaviouristic, and with emphasis on letter recognition it is now viewed as a classic example of the rigid *bottom up* approach, or as READ Educational Trust (2008a:18) refers to it, *apprenticeship*. Reading was taught by a teacher modelling how reading should be practiced and the children imitating them until they supposedly perfected it.

3.2.1.1 Methods of teaching

When Grade 1 teachers employ the *alphabet* approach in developing reading skills, they predominantly use the drill method, which encourages young readers to learn to read by memorisation and recitation (Dechant, 1982:181). They develop reading skills by firstly teaching children names of the letters of the alphabet, secondly to name the letters of a word in sequence, and thirdly to pronounce it (Carrilo, 1976:20).

3.2.1.2 Strengths and limitations

In using this approach, the Grade 1 teachers help their learners to break the alphabetic code, which is one of the prerequisite skills that a beginning reader needs to acquire (Dechant, 1982:193). As a consequence, knowing the letters of the alphabet and how to spell out the combinations of those letters is advantageous. However, Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008:89) argue that the *alphabet* approach is a boring, time-consuming and meaningless activity that retards the development of reading, and that it lacks a clear correspondence between the names and sounds of letters.

3.2.1.3 Reflective thoughts

With memorisation and drill being traditionally the preferred teaching methods, the Grade 1 teachers who used this approach, did not give thought to helping children read for meaning. This scenario motivated the rationale behind the implementation of the NCS which was underpinned by OBE. It was intended to eliminate such mechanical behaviour and to replace it with more innovative approaches that would challenge learners to think creatively and critically. Consequently, it was considered crucial that the Grade 1 teachers be knowledgeable about recent improvements and developments in reading methods.

3.2.2 Phonic approach

The *phonic* approach is based on a premise that a relationship exists between written language and spoken language (Flanagan, 1995:27; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:89; Washtell, 2008a:32). When Grade 1 teachers use this approach, they make their learners aware that the author puts her/his speech in writing and the reader reverses the process by returning written language into speech. In so doing, the reader translates the written language (letters) to spoken language (sounds), relying on graphophonic cues and using personal knowledge of language to establish a link between sound-symbol, letter combinations and sight words and construct meaning. The proponents of the *phonic* approach believe that it is suitable for primary grades in that learners must be assisted to sound out words in accordance with their spelling (Reyhner, 2008:2).

Horner (1972:21) asserts that the *phonic* method is underlined by two principles, namely, that letters stand for sounds and that children should be trained to hear the phonemes (sound units) within words rather than in isolation. It came into existence as a result of discontentment with the *alphabet* approach (Lapp & Flood, 1986:233), over which it was considered an improvement. According to Kelly (2008:8), Reyhner (2008:2) and Smith (1971:60-61), it stems from the learning theory of behaviourism, which views all learning as a process of habit formation and the observable circumstances under which it occurs. In this theory a young reader is portrayed as a “clean slate” and learning determined by the stimulus-response (S-R) contingencies, whereby a response is merely a piece of observable behaviour, indicating physical change. Learning is therefore a process of reinforcing appropriate forms of behaviour and ignoring inappropriate ones (Christie, Enz & Vukelish, 2003:24; Jordan, Carlile & Stack, 2008:21-22 & 25; Trawick-Smith, 2010:40). Within the behaviourist context, learning is a process through which learners accumulate knowledge of the natural world, with focus on the way teachers transmit that knowledge (Murphy, 1997:2).

The Grade 1 teachers who employ the *phonic* approach allow their learners to read by decoding which means they use letter sounds rather than their names (Kelly, 2008:6-7). For instance, when the reader sees the word *motho* (person), s/he will decide by sound and then blend the phonemes together, as in mo+tho, in syllables,

in contrast to pronouncing each letter name as in **m+o+t+h+o**. Brooks (in Washtell, 2008a:32) makes a distinction between *analytic* and *synthetic* phonics. In using the *analytic* phonics, the Grade 1 teachers move from whole words to parts of the word as they expose young readers to sight words and challenge them to be actively involved in the reading process as they construct new meanings (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:46). The *synthetic* phonics works in the opposite direction, with teachers first introducing individual letters (phonemes) then systematically adding on other letters to synthesise into the Consonant-Vowel-Consonant (CVC) in English and Consonant-Vowel (CV) in Sesotho pattern (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:89-90; Vacca *et al.*, 2003:46). These terms are discussed in depth in subsequent sections.

3.2.2.1 Methods of teaching

In using synthetic phonics, the Grade 1 teachers who are Sesotho mother tongue speakers and use it as LoLT, can invite learners to take an active part in problem solving as they bring their own ideas to what they are reading. They can assist them to make deductions and inferences when they come across new words and draw analogies in their attempts to work out what the new words means (Washtell, 2008a:32). In using *synthetic* phonics, the Grade 1 teachers are able to develop reading by starting with phonemes in order to help their readers to gradually develop synthesising of simple consonant-vowel-consonant. This notion concurs with the views of Carrilo (1976:28, 30), that young readers should make use of context clues as well as picture clues (if the book has pictures) to work out what a new word means. If the reader still struggles it is then that s/he can resort to sounding each letter or letter combination as a word identification strategy.

3.2.2.2 Teacher's role

Dechant (1982:202-203) and Flanagan (1995:28) agree that teachers need to follow guidelines on how to develop reading based on the *phonic* approach. The Grade 1 teacher's role is to introduce the sounds of a language in a particular order, starting with single letter sound/symbol correspondence and followed by letter combination sound/symbol correspondence. S/he must give systematic instruction in the correspondence of letters and sounds and allow learners to look at the letters or letter combination and repeat the corresponding sounds. The teacher has to assist learners to learn to read words by combining and blending sounds, and by sounding

out the words (Flanagan, 1995:28). In line with the behaviourist view of learning, it is apparent that the teacher's role is to transmit knowledge to passive learners. If teachers use this approach then their classes are teacher-dominated, leaving learners no room to ask questions or seek clarification; their role is to memorise what teachers have said (Murphy, 1997:2-3). The use of this approach is evidence that class activities are still teacher-directed and controlled.

3.2.2.3 Strengths and limitations

Various authors (Carrilo, 1976:19; Flanagan, 1995:30; Horner, 1972:26; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:90-91) have pointed out the strengths of using the *phonic* approach in developing reading skills. For instance, its use of a step-by-step procedure makes it easy to understand and master for teachers. It can be used with Grade 1 learners immediately to read on sight many of the words that they learn first through sounding out, and as an analytical tool to help readers work out unfamiliar words. Learners may use it to read single words accurately by applying the correct rules to some of the African languages. Through this approach young readers can be assisted to develop independence in discovering for themselves what the word is. It is valuable in assisting young reader to master spelling and suitable for both group and individual work.

The same authors (Carrilo, 1976:19; Flanagan, 1995:30; Horner, 1972:26; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:90-91) also point out some of the limitations of this approach, notably an over-reliance on sounding out words at the expense of making meaning. It ignores the established language patterns that children already know and bring to reading, and distorts their expectations through listening to stories from texts that are contrived and unauthentic. It is complicated by using only 26 letters to represent all the sounds in a language and makes it difficult for a learner to recognise when s/he is reading nonsense. The reader may find it highly abstract and complex to analyse the letter/sound correspondence and then synthesise the sound units into words. Young readers are held back from reading a range of worthwhile books since it encourages them to read each word separately in a sentence. Incorporating a large amount of drill in its early stages, it is rigid and impedes true reading.

On one hand, these strengths of using the *phonic* approach give it credibility in developing reading skills within the OBE system, especially in Grade 1 classes. It is closely associated with the *bottom up* approaches, because Grade 1 teachers need to equip learners with lower-order reading skills by means of repetition, drill, and memorisation, thus serving as a means to an end in helping to reinforce understanding. On the other hand, this approach may be better used in conjunction with other reading approaches, to balance the negative aspects inherent in it. The authenticity of this argument will be tested as the other approaches are discussed in subsequent sections.

3.2.2.4 Reflective thoughts

According to the learning theory of behaviourism, the Grade 1 teachers who employ the *phonic* approach play a more dominant role than their learners, who are expected to accumulate passively the information presented to them. It is for this reason that teachers relied on drill and memorisation to introduce the sounds of their language (Kelly, 2008:7). Most Grade 1 teachers still find value in using it, especially when they want to be in control. However, when used according to the steps outlined by Dechant (1982:202-203) above, they can still afford learners opportunities to use the target words they have learnt in their own sentences. In so doing, learners move beyond mere word identification and teachers assist them to move towards blending the separate sounds into phonemic families and words. Learners gradually begin to construct meaning as they use the target words in their own sentences. In considering the use of the *phonic* approach, it seems as if the more Grade 1 teachers guide and expose their learners to mastering the symbol-sound relationship, the more the spelling and pronunciation improves. This practice is a step towards enhancing reading for meaning and can therefore be relevant to developing reading skills within the context of the NCS.

3.2.3 Look-and-say approach

The *look-and-say approach* shares some traits with the *phonic* approach, with both approaches starting from an understanding that reading is a process of decoding written language back into spoken language (Flanagan, 1995:27, 30). Although both are based on the same premise the focus is different, with the *phonic* stressing the

association of basic speech sounds with letter symbols and their combinations as a means of identifying words, and the *look-and-say* encouraging the sight visualisation of words as wholes. This approach has its origin in the gestalt learning theory, which emphasises the importance of the 'whole' to which the 'parts' are subordinate (Horner, 1972:18; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:91; Kelly, 2008:7-8; Landsdown, 1974:39; Wessels & Van den Berg, 1999:233).

The success of *look-and-say* approach can be attributed to the use of sight words (those with a high frequency), i.e., words that children see often, that have special meaning for them and that name frequent interactions (Lapp & Flood, 1986:103). In using this approach, the Grade 1 teachers can encourage learners immediately to take part in the reading process and can be used to construct meaningful sentences, thus encouraging them to read more (Horner, 1972:18). The *look-and-say* approach is synonymous with word recognition and plays a significant role in improving reading accuracy. The Grade 1 teachers can assist their learners learn to read by using their visual memory to differentiate between words (Flanagan, 1995:30). Wessels and Van Den Berg (1999:233) state that young readers recognise words by their shapes or configuration, and the more familiar they are with them the better their word recognition skills.

3.2.3.1 Methods of teaching

The Grade 1 teachers can employ the *look-and-say* approach in the classroom by using the sight-word, word-phrase and the sentence-story methods (Carrillo, 1976:17). Once the teachers indicate that they can integrate several methods, the monotony of teaching reading is broken and there is movement towards developing reading skills. These three methods ensure that developing reading skills extends beyond mere memorisation of words because a phrase, a sentence and a story contain more meaning than can a word. In all these methods the teacher still plays a dominant role while the learners learn the newly introduced words through repeating and drilling until they can remember them. Flanagan (1995:30) advises teachers to introduce a limited number of words at each stage rather than many at once.

3.2.3.2 *Teacher's role*

Carrillo (1976:17), Dechant (1982:189), Flanagan (1995:30) and Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008:92) suggest some steps which Grade 1 teachers may use when using the sight-configuration/sight methods. A teacher's role in using *look-and-say* approach involves these steps:

- put a word on the board or uses a chart;
- pronounce the word make sure the learners look at it as it pronounced;
- ask learners to pronounce the word, making sure that they look at it;
- tell the learners what the word means;
- ask the learners to repeat the word until they remember it;
- use pictures to introduce new words;
- repeat the process until the learners can understand the differences between words;
- present the word in a written-sentence context, read the sentence, allow learners to read it aloud, lead learners to identify and underline the word that is being taught;
- present the word orally in another teacher-made sentence;
- allow learners to make a sentence using the word;
- write this sentence on another card or chalkboard while encouraging the advanced learners to write it themselves;
- tell the learners to read the sentence aloud, let them first identify the word and then underline it, or frame it, or trace it in colour;
- present the word in isolation again and have the learners sound it; and
- present the words at random to test retention after teaching various words using the above techniques.

The emphasis in using *look-and-say* approach is to introduce the whole word to the learners and to ensure that they understand its meaning. The teacher focuses on *phonological awareness*, which means that s/he helps learners to appreciate the sounds of speech as distinct from their meaning and that words can be divided into a sequence of phonemes (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998:51-53).

3.2.3.3 Strengths and limitations

There are many benefits that Grade 1 teachers can enjoy which are associated with employing *look-and-say* approach in developing the learners' reading skills (Carrillo, 1976:18; Flanagan, 1995:32; Horner, 1972:18; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:92; Kelly, 2008:8; Wessels & Van den Berg, 1999:233). For instance it makes it easier for teachers to implement a well-structured and graded programme of words to teach, leaving them free to concentrate on meaningful wholes rather than parts. It requires few resources as the words are from the learners' life worlds and thus help them to develop a core vocabulary that they can use to read. It helps them to learn to use the syntactic and pictorial clues to make meaning of what they are reading and to recognise words quickly if those words are used in meaningful contexts, thus building confidence. Learners are also helped to learn to read with meaning from the beginning, if teachers use texts that appeal to their interests.

The authors mentioned above warn teachers about the limitations of using the *look-and-say* approach. It relies excessively on the learners' visual memory, thus encouraging parroting. It discourages them from using other strategies that might help them to gain independence in reading when used alone. The learners are encouraged to guess when they are faced with new words and it is slow in introducing learners to real books from early stages, especially if the vocabulary is limited, stilted and unnatural. When teachers use the *look-and-say* approach, they focus too much on repetition and drill when used in traditional teaching and learning situations. Meaningful contexts are disregarded in the reading tasks and emphasis is laid on isolated words and their linguistic units. It neglects letters and sounds, which leads to inferior spelling abilities.

Seemingly, it is important for the Grade 1 teachers to take cognisance of these strengths and limitations so as to avoid perpetuating negative practices in developing reading skills. They must remember that reading for meaning should be the major drive behind all reading activities in and out of the classroom.

3.2.3.4 Reflective thoughts

Since the *look-and-say* approach is grounded in the gestalt theory of learning, it deserves some consideration in the development of reading skills within the context

of OBE in developing Grade 1 learners' reading skills. This is particularly significant considering that most learners come to school already familiar with hearing and listening to the sound of words used in their specific language. According to Lapp and Flood (1986:103), learners already have a vocabulary from the sight words used in their environments. This approach makes it easier for them to sound the written words and begin to make associations as to how the language is used. Since learners hear each word as a whole it is only logical that teachers should use *look-and-say* to help them read words as 'wholes'.

3.2.4 Language-experience approach

The *language-experience* approach is based on a premise that a child's spoken language is a means of expressing thoughts, ideas and meaning through story dictation (Coltman & Place, 2013:115; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:93; Wessels, 2010:77). Since this approach encourages learners to read their own sentences and stories, Coltman and Place (2013:106) refer to it as "inside-out". Dechant (1982:167) asserts that the language-experience approach is definitely a reading approach and not a method, but rather a "philosophy about the type of materials to use in beginning reading". In employing the *language-experience* approach, the Grade 1 teacher is able to prompt a learner to relate a personal experience which s/he writes on a chalkboard or poster. That piece of writing serves as a text for developing reading skills, which include activities for vocabulary development, phonemic awareness, word recognition, reading for meaning and fluency (Coltman & Place, 2013:123; Gillis-Carlebach, 1993:91; Vacca *et al.*, 2003:48). Through the use of the *language-experience* approach, learners come to realise that as they communicate their thoughts and ideas they provide content for developing reading skills (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:48). In using this approach, the Grade 1 teachers afford their learners opportunities to see their spoken language turn into written language as teachers write down their ideas on the charts. They also help their learners to realise that written language can be read, thus making reading meaningful and interesting (Dechant, 1982:167; Lapp & Flood, 1986:246). This can be associated with the *spontaneous* and the *top down* approaches to developing reading skills, since it indicates the interrelatedness of thought, oral and written language (Abisamra, 2007:7; Gillis-Carlebach, 1993:91; Hunter-Grundin, 1979:50; Lapp & Flood,

1986:244; Wessels & Van den Berg, 1999:233). Dechant (1982:168), however, advises teachers to write the material with standard spelling.

The *language-experience* approach subscribes to the psycholinguistic theory that stresses the interdisciplinary study of psychology and linguistics. Psycholinguists assert that the various codes of the language, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and lexicon should be studied holistically in order to construct meaning (Flanagan, 1995:34; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:87; Norton, 1997:44). The psycholinguistic theory takes into consideration the learners' own experiences and language as a precondition for developing their reading and writing skills. The learner's unique language experiences, based on real life experiences, form a solid base from which each can enhance listening, reading and writing skills in preparation for encounters with books (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:93). The psycholinguistic view of reading suggests that readers act on and interact with written language in their endeavours to make meaning of the text (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:21). This ability to enables them to begin formal instruction by means of reading and writing their own stories and books in real and meaningful contexts, within the communicative process (Flanagan, 1995:34; Wessels & Van den Berg, 1999:233).

When Grade 1 teachers employ the *language-experience* approach in facilitating the development of reading skills, they take cognisance of the interrelatedness between language and culture which can be linked to Vygotsky' socio-cultural theory that accords significance to the interactive reality of language acquisition (Flanagan, 1995:33; Hugo, 2013:32; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:93). This brings to mind Bruner's (in Norton, 1997:33) socio-cultural views on language acquisition, with the child being confronted with language as s/he interacts with a mother who meticulously arranges the linguistic encounters of her child, thereby elevating the mother's role. Vygotsky's concepts of 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) and 'scaffolding' link well with Bruner's views on language acquisition, ZPD being:

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 including the functions of the child that have not yet matured, but are in the process of maturation. (Vygotsky, 1978:86)

Scaffolding is the assistance the adult provides in order to build on the strengths the child already has while ensuring that s/he operates within the parameters of the ZPD (Charlesworth, 2004:72; Hugo, 2013:45; Wessels, 2010:4-5). Consequently, the Grade 1 teacher provides scaffolding for the learners to develop reading skills.

3.2.4.1 Methods of teaching

The methods associated with *language-experience* approach in developing reading skills reflect a more learner-centred style than those associated with *phonic* and *look-and-say*. The methods of developing reading skills become apparent when the teacher is in the process of developing learners' reading skills. The teachers may use the *discussion, cooperative learning, project, role-play and experimentation* methods to encourage the learners to relate their experiences in class (Gawe, Jacobs & Vakalisa, 2011:186-211).

3.2.4.2 Teacher's role

In employing the *look-and-say* approach, the Grade 1 teachers can follow the steps suggested by Carrillo (1976:15), Flanagan (1995:35-36), Harris & Smith (1986:398), Lapp & Flood (1986:246-247). The teacher may ask the learners to take part in or recall an experience of interest or significance, allow them to talk about it and then guide them to establish meaning and vocabulary. In order to ensure better understanding of the content, the teacher may request learners to draw, paint, or act out part of the experience. S/he writes down something that learners dictate about their pictures or actions while drawing attention to some of the conventions of the print, such as capital letters. In using an experience chart, the teacher is able to provide for commonality of experience, have learners narrate their experiences, record on chart paper or on the chalkboard the key ideas of the story, have learners read the chart as a whole, one sentence at a time and isolate parts of a chart for emphasis, selecting words with phoneme-grapheme correspondences that need to be taught.

When the teacher has completed the above exercise s/he can have the learners reread the chart as a whole, make a file of experience charts and label them "Our Big Book", then have the learners read the stories occasionally. In addition, s/he can ask each learner to read her/his sentence while s/he records the learner's sentence,

statement or comment in various ways. In order to integrate reading and writing skills, the teacher can ask learners to copy this sentence, however crudely. It is important that s/he collects together the different things that the learners have written.

3.2.4.3 Strengths and limitations

The use of the *language-experience* approach to develop reading helps the Grade 1 to enable her/his learners to recognise the purpose of reading and writing because they help their learners to acquire skills in a context that is comprehensible to the learners (Carrillo, 1976:15-16; Dechant, 1982:168; Flanagan, 1995:37-38; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:92). It is also useful for helping learners to realise quickly that reading and writing enable a person to achieve interpersonal goals. Through its use the teacher exploits the belief that all learners can read and so exposes them to a range of reading strategies. The teacher is able to accommodate reluctant and disadvantaged readers, and be in a position to recognise individual differences amongst them more easily. The teacher's role has a built-in motivational element because learners enjoy reading what they have written, showing that the reading materials, the words, the meanings and the language patterns are within their linguistic experience, under their control, and allow for flexibility of content.

The *language-experience* approach has its own limitations. Carrillo (1976:16), Flanagan (1995:37) and Lapp and Flood (1986:246) maintain that the effective implementation of this approach depends largely on the teachers and that they need to communicate their real interest in hearing what each learner has to say, or their real interest in writing down what a learner asks her/him to write or their genuine respect for what children already know. Teachers have to consider that mistakes or errors are an opportunity for learning and experimenting with language, rather than a deficit on the part of the learner, and that this approach is suitable when instruction is in the learners' home language, thus building on it.

Teachers are expected to use sufficient paper and other resources for reproduction of the learners' writing and talking, and need to be aware that, in large classes, only some learners can benefit from dictating to the teacher at any one time. Some learners may memorise the materials, giving the false impression of the act of

reading. Teachers must guard against introducing too many words at one time, as this may result in failure to teach any of them. Finally, teachers should use their own discretion in deciding whether to edit the learners' oral contributions and if editing has to be done the learner should not feel humiliated.

3.2.4.4 Reflective thoughts

The *language-experience* approach is more inclined towards the contemporary approaches than *look-and-say* and *phonic*, and teachers need thorough training before they can use it to develop reading skills. It gave rise to a reading programme, known as the *Breakthrough to Literacy (BTL)* (Wessels, 2007:131), which was a mother tongue literacy course in African languages for the first year of the school, with the intention of developing initial reading and writing in the mother tongue. It is a special reading programme that uses the *language-experience* and child-centred methods, teaches handwriting as a skill apart from composing, and gives a step-by-step plan for teaching the written form of language. *BTL* will be discussed in-depth in the next chapter.

3.2.5 Text-based approach

When teachers employ the *text-based* approach, they introduce learners to real books in developing reading skills, and written in a language similar to the one they use in their environment. Teachers are able to make their learners aware of the multiplicity of meaning inherent in texts and by paying special attention to meaningful plots and relevant themes (Kelly, 2008:9). This approach is also referred to as the *whole language* approach, with focus placed on the meaning of texts rather than sounds of letters, as is the case in the *phonic* method. In spite of emphasising the meaning of text in the *whole language* approach, phonics instruction is not ignored. According to Reyhner (2008:2), it can benefit learners if teachers provide a literacy-rich environment in which the four basic language skills are integrated in the teaching of reading. It aligns well with the *top down* approach, encouraging young readers to use their prior knowledge in order to interpret the meaning of what they are reading as they construct personal meaning from the text.

The *text-based* approach gains strength from the learning theory of *constructivism* (Reyhner, 2008:2). Jordan, Carlile and Stack (2008:55) describe *constructivism* as a process through which one acts on information, linking the new with one's prior knowledge to develop knowledge. It embodies the idea that learning is a process that learners use to construct meaning as they make sense of their life experiences. This view is twofold, firstly with focus on how the learner thinks about learning, and secondly, that knowledge cannot be independent of the meaning attributed to experience by the learner, or a group of learners (Hein, 1991:1-2). Learning, within the context of constructivism is viewed as an active process of constructing new ideas and concepts on the basis of the knowledge already possessed. This learning theory emphasises the role of prior knowledge as a basis for understanding new knowledge. Learners' failure to link new knowledge to old in a meaningful way may result in rote learning (Reyhner, 2008:3).

Vygotsky's (1978:86) ZPD and scaffolding come into play once more, highlighting the notion that learners can acquire new knowledge and skills above their present level of understanding, with some assistance from more knowledgeable adults (teachers) or peers. The ZPD can be understood in terms of what the learner can do with help, while still being stretched to perform alone. It is critical for the Grade 1 teachers to know the children's ZPD so as to anticipate what their learners can do next when facilitating the development of reading skills. When Grade 1 teachers scaffold reading, the learners acquire reading skills faster and better when they assist learners to refine their thinking and performance (Vygotsky as cited, in Murphy, 1997:5).

3.2.5.1 A text

In order to understand better the *text-based* approach it seems important for Grade 1 teachers to have an understanding of the concept *text*. For the Department of Education (DoE, 2002b:21) it is anything that can be read or viewed. A text can also be described as a form of communication, spoken, written or visual. Examples of oral texts are conversations and speeches, whilst written texts include letters, novels, stories and poems, and visual texts comprise plays, films and multimedia texts. Some texts are a combination of words and images or sounds of which the reader or viewer may make meaning. These may include advertisements, picture books,

documentaries and the World Wide Web. There are newer kinds of electronic-based texts which make different demands on the learners such as hyper-text documents and e-mails (Department of Education Tasmania (DoE T), 2007:1).

The Department of Education Tasmania (DoE T, 2007:2-5) identifies three categories of texts which teachers can use in developing the learners' reading skills namely, literature, mass media and everyday texts.

- a) *Literature* texts are available as fiction or non-fiction, used to represent, recreate, shape and explore human experiences. They range from myths, fairy tales, ballades, legends, expository texts, novels poetry, cartoons and song lyrics. Literature texts are further grouped into three subcategories namely, classic, contemporary and popular literature texts.
- b) *Mass media* texts are designed to attract mass audience in the form of videos, newspapers, magazines radio, cartoon and posters in the following subcategories: news reports, personal viewpoints, advertising, drama, documentaries, journalism and reviews.
- c) *Everyday* texts are part of daily experience as encountered at homes and in the wider community, and range from speeches, classified advertisements, telephonic conversations, instructions, labels, diaries and journals.

Texts can be *narrative (or literary)*, that is with a single structural pattern referred to as *story grammar* and intending to inform and persuade. They are characterised by a theme, plot, conflict, resolution, characters and a setting. Alternatively, they may be *expository (or informational)*, identified by a variety of patterns such as descriptions, sequence, compare and contrast, cause-effect and problem-solution. Examples are essays, speeches, laboratory procedures, journals, and newspaper or magazine articles that use data and details to inform and persuade (FOR-PD, 2005:1; Seligmann, 2012:155-156).

The Grade 1 teachers are encouraged to use both narrative and expository texts at primary education to develop a more balanced approach to reading and enhance learners' reading performance (Kamil & Lane, 1997:1-2).

3.2.5.2 The concept text in the NCS

Outcomes-based Education (OBE) has its roots in constructivism on the basis that learners are encouraged to actively broaden their knowledge about the world, experiences and skills by incorporating them into new knowledge. The process of developing learners' reading skills pivots on outcomes that learners must demonstrate having achieved (Wessels, 2007:29). This process is described in detail in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) Grades R-9 (Schools) Policy Languages English – Home Language (DoE, 2002b:6-7). Three of the Languages Learning Outcomes reflect the concept in their formulation.

Learning Outcome 3: The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional value in **texts** [my emphasis].

Learning Outcome 4: The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative **texts** for a wide range of purposes [my emphasis].

Learning Outcome 6: The learner will be able to use the sounds, words and grammar of the language to create and interpret **texts** [my emphasis].

Although the other three Learning Outcomes (LO 1, 2 and 5) do not necessarily reflect the word 'text' in their formulation, it does not mean that texts are disregarded. They feature predominantly because they bring to life the integration of all the Learning Outcomes in language teaching and in developing reading skills. Their use should also happen when teachers assist their learners to read and view for information (LO 3), write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts (LO 4), and use the sounds, words and grammar of the language to create and interpret texts (LO 6).

Learning Outcomes are not achieved as separate entities but are integrated to maintain a holistic approach to how learners develop language and communicative competence. The significance of texts in the development of reading skills is highlighted in the way outcomes are integrated in language teaching and learning, as when learners have to listen to a particular kind of text e.g., a description, of a process such as gold mining or papermaking, read and analyse key features of

another text of the same type e.g., use of simple present tense, passive voice, linking words such as ‘first’, ‘next’, ‘then’ and the others and design and create a new text of the same type, including visual material in the form of a flow diagram (DoE, 2002a:6-7).

The Department of Education (DoE, 2002b:21) provided each grade with recommended texts that teachers could use in classrooms. Texts are of different types, such as oral, written/visual and multimedia but the most important currently available for development of reading skills are reading books, both the Big Books and the Small Books. However, the Grade 1 teachers can make use of other recommended texts to make lessons more exciting and creative. The (DoE, 2002b:21) recommends texts for Grade 1 as indicated in the table below.

Table 3.2: Types of texts (DoE, 2002b:21)

TYPES OF TEXTS		
ORAL	WRITTEN/VISUAL	MULTIMEDIA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Narratives e.g., simple stories, fables, legends; - Instructions of growing Complexity; - Recounts; - Simple descriptions; - Action rhymes; - Songs; - Poems; and - Games. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple stories; - Lists e.g., shopping lists; - Instructions e.g. how to make a paper aeroplane; - Simple descriptions; - Simple informational texts; e.g., books on shapes, animals, seashells) - Simple word problems; - Poems; - Games; - Picture books; - Picture puzzles; - Simple charts; and - Reference books. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Television; - Children’s films; and - Video, CD-ROMs and Internet (where available).

In order to strengthen the value of texts in the teaching of languages and developing reading skills, the Department of Education (DoE, 2002b:32, 34, 36, 38) provided teachers with *Assessment Standards* for each Grade, under each learning outcome.

For example *Learning Outcome 3: Reading and Viewing (Grade 1)* the *Assessment Standards* are outlined as in the following table:

Table 3.3: Assessment Standards (DoE, 2002b:32, 34, 36, 38)

ASSESSMENT STANDARDS					
Uses visual cues to make meaning	Role-plays reading	Makes meaning of written texts	Recognises letters and words and makes meaning of written texts	Develops phonic awareness	Reads for information and enjoyment
-predicts from the cover of a book what the story is all about; -uses illustrations to interpret the meanings of stories, and tells a story; and -interprets information including simple tables and graphical images found in print, media and advertising such as calendars, and rosters, HIV/AIDS posters.	-holds a book the right way up; and -turns pages appropriately.	- reads a story with the teacher and: -discusses the main idea, -identifies the details and says whether the story was liked and why.	-recognises letters and words and makes meaning of written text; -reads simple written materials; -reads own writing and the writings of classmates; and -uses phonic and word recognition skills to decode new or unfamiliar words in context.	-recognises and names letters of the alphabet; - understands that letter names remain constant but the sounds they represent may vary; - group common words into word families; - recognises two letter blends at the beginning of words; - recognises common consonant digraphs at the beginning and end of words; - recognises some high frequency words including own name and print in the environment.	-reads picture books and simple captions.

Emphasis on the value of texts and the *text-based* approach in the NCS is indicative that OBE teaching and learning environments are learner-centred, with learners being presented with opportunities to construct new knowledge by establishing meaningful connections, engaged in problem-solving, identify and evaluate problems, and find ways to apply their learning to those problems. In this paradigm,

learning is viewed as a process of constructing meaningful representations, with learners given multiple opportunities to make sense of their experiential world. They can make mistakes as long as they are a means to gain insight into how they organise their experiential world (Murphy, 1997:7). It is against this background that Grade 1 teachers should have a firm understanding of what the term *constructivism* entails and how it relates to *text-based* approaches. This understanding will make it easier for them to use texts in the development of reading skills.

3.2.5.3 The concept text in PIRLS 2006

It is also important to note that literary and informational texts were used extensively to assess the learners' reading performance in the PIRLS 2001 and 2006. The literary texts used in the PIRLS 2001 and 2006 were mainly short stories which contained one or two episodes of problem/resolution, while the informational texts represented a variety of chronological and non-chronological texts that comprised short informational materials involving text, maps, illustrations, diagrams, and photographs organised topically or chronologically. Literary texts were used to involve the learners in imaginary events, settings, actions, consequences, characters, atmospheres, feelings, and ideas, bringing to them each one's own experiences, feelings, appreciation of language, and knowledge of literary forms. Through informational texts, learners were exposed to the dynamics of the world as they and other experienced it.

The PIRLS Report 2006 reiterates the significance attached to *text-based* approaches in developing reading skills, and their setting new trends. Seemingly the selected Grade 1 teachers in this study need to be conversant with this approach and how it is used in developing the learners' reading skills and how they assist them to be good readers.

3.2.5.4 Methods of teaching

Methods of teaching are determined by the kind of learning environment a teacher creates in her/his classroom. The *text-based approach* encourages teachers to create learning environments in which learners feel safe to question and reflect on their own processes as well as to perform reading activities that help them reflect on their prior knowledge and experiences (Concept to Classroom, 2004a:3). Teachers,

who use them must acknowledge that each learner is unique and learns differently, using methods that will enhance learning as an active process of constructing meaning. They must encourage learners to take part in class / group discussions and practice, using techniques such as prompting learners to formulate their own questions, allowing multiple interpretations and expressions of learning and encouraging group work and the use of peers as resources (Concept to Classroom, 2004b:1).

3.2.5.5 *Teacher's role*

When teachers employ the *text-based* approach, their role is to provide guidance and to facilitate the learners' process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes and values (Wessels, 2007:29). Von Glasersfeld (as cited in Murphy, 1997:4) further states that the teacher plays the role of a "midwife in the birth of understanding". The teacher's role is to ensure that books and other types of texts are available in the classrooms and provide learners with opportunities and incentives to read a variety of books and other texts so as to build up their knowledge. As a reader herself/himself, a teacher guides, coordinates, facilitates, tutors, coaches and becomes a resource advisor. In assuming these roles, a teacher is in a better position to present new ideas to the learners, guide and support them in attaching meaning as they read texts. The teacher also listens and makes a diagnosis of learners' progress in reading activities (Murphy, 1997:5). In addition to the above, the teacher moderates and makes suggestions, while simultaneously allowing learners to experiment, ask questions and play around with new ideas they develop from reading different texts (Concept to Classroom, 2004:2).

3.2.5.6 *Selection of texts*

In using the *text-based* approach teachers need to use texts to facilitate learning, and know their different types and categories. The aim is to use a variety of texts in the classroom in order to ensure that learners create, interpret and analyse them across the range (DoE T, 2007:5). A challenge facing teachers lies in making decisions about which texts to use and how to select them. Kamil and Lane (1997:2) warn that failure to expose learners to a representative range of texts would be detrimental to developing reading skills in that if learners are provided reading instruction only in stories (narrative texts), they do not receive instruction in how to evaluate the truth

value of a text. Similarly, if learners do not have the strategy of reading only what is necessary in information texts they may have to work their way through much information that is irrelevant and, ultimately, distracting from the task at hand.

The Grade 1 teachers using the *text-based* approach are advised of a tendency for primary school teachers to use narrative texts to develop reading skills, mainly because stories are easier to comprehend and because they have a predictable structure (Kamil & Lane, 1997:1). Collins (2008:92) strengthens the argument for using narrative texts by confirming that stories have a built-in potential to help learners appreciate and support understanding of the world, in addition to having clear story lines. Teachers are, however, warned against using predominantly narrative/literary texts in primary classes at the Foundation Phase at the expense of expository/informational texts.

3.2.5.7 Criteria for selecting texts

Once teachers have set their minds on using texts to develop reading skills they need some expertise in their selection. This is primarily because there must be alignment between the type of text and the reading purpose. According to the Department of Education of Tasmania (DoE T, 2007:2), teachers should select texts for developing reading skills which reflect the following criteria:

- provide a framework that gradually introduces strategies required for skilled reading;
- deal with themes and issues relating to the everyday lives of the readers;
- provide opportunities for exploring language at the text, word, part word and letter level;
- use a simple language structure, so that learners do not have to review many oral language forms to access meaning;
- provide opportunities for the acquisition of alphabet letters, letter clusters and common sight words in natural contexts;
- present many of the conventions of written language including spelling, punctuation and capitalisation;
- encourage problem solving on text by having to make analogies, predictions, checking and self-corrections;

- have illustrations that give maximum support for the emergent reader, gradually extending experience as reading is more confident; and
- use appropriate book structure, text size, spacing and layout to match the text type, text difficulty and reader skill.

It is further suggested that narrative texts for beginning readers should be identifiable by having an uncluttered layout, uncomplicated storyline, secure ending/definite resolution to story, familiar events and characters to whom they can relate, strong language structures and clear genre, humour and fun, left to right readability, action and animation, repetition, rhythm and rhyme as well as onomatopoeia, sound and language play (DoE T, 2007:2).

3.2.5.8 Text patterns

In the same way that the text structure is important in developing reading skills, so is the text pattern. Grow (1996:1) maintains that most texts have recurring organisational patterns. Jones (as cited in Grow, 1996:1) describes three generic types of organisations namely;

- texts containing one *major element*, plus supporting information, such as passages describing a single object, paragraphs that state a proposition and offer support for it, simple arguments and definition of concepts;
- texts describing a *sequence*, such as chronological narratives, step-by-step logical accounts, step-by-step descriptions of a procedure or stages in a development and other sequential narratives, such as a goal/action/ outcome report; and
- texts *comparing* two or more elements, such as comparison and contrast, problem/solution, cause/effect and analysis of interactions (cooperation and conflict).

Teachers must develop an awareness of these organisational patterns amongst their learners by using ‘think aloud’ strategy. They can also highlight signal words and explain their meanings as they read the passage aloud (FOR- PD, 2005:2).

3.2.5.9 Reading strategies for the use of texts

When Grade 1 teachers use texts to develop reading skills, they need to acquaint themselves with the reading strategies that will render their facilitative role in the development of reading skills effective and meaningful. The Department of Education

Tasmania (DoE T, 2007:12-19) suggests ten strategies that can be used to introduce texts to the young/beginning readers.

a) *Research*

The Grade 1 teachers are encouraged to undertake text-based research to access and report on information about unfamiliar topics and concepts to be encountered in the text. Sample particular groups (parents, friends, shopkeepers, peers) using questionnaires/interviews to research attitudes, values and opinions related to issues raised in the text. Report the research findings back to the class.

b) *Parallel narrative*

The Grade 1 teacher can use a decontextualised skeleton to help learners create their own stories and role play which fill in the plot outline. S/he can select a concept or value which represents an important theme in the text and have learners explore the issue in discussion before creating their own texts in which the concept of value is an important theme. S/he can select an important aspect of the text (e.g., plot, use of structures) and have learners create their own text on the chosen focus for a particular audience, genre, e.g., a picture book for an audience of Grade 2/3 learners on the theme.

c) *Vocabulary awareness*

If there are particular words which might be unfamiliar to learners, the Grade 1 teacher can spend some time introducing the words to learners. Learners could prepare a notice board or Big Book glossary of terms with clear explanations from the list provided by the teacher. Learners could use “Who am I” riddle structures to explain the vocabulary to their peers. Teams of learners could use a dictionary to locate the meanings of all chosen words and ensure that all team members understand them, prior to randomly selected team members answering quiz questions.

d) *Displays*

Prior to reading texts, the Grade 1 teacher can display artefacts, illustrations, and photographs relevant to historical, geographical, cultural background of the

text. S/he can display and explore visual texts (posters, paintings, video clips. etc.) which represent perspectives on themes and issues relevant to the text.

e) *Book covers*

The Grade 1 teachers can with an individual learner, or as a group or whole class deconstruct the information presented on the book cover. Both print and visual information reveals an attitude to, and understanding of, the text, the reader and their relationship. From book covers learners can predict possible story lines, characters and themes. Learners can utilise their knowledge of text types to predict genre, language and the tone from their predictions. The predicting strategy is useful when teachers structure regular opportunities to reflect on and confirm predictions when the actual reading of text takes place.

f) *Mindmapping*

The teachers can with an individual learner or in pairs or small groups, use coloured texts and a large sheet of paper, have learners construct visual/verbal mindmaps (mostly images with some words) of their understanding of the issues, themes, concepts or genres with which the text they will be reading will be concerned. Learners should revisit their mind maps both during reading and after reading to amend and refine their mind maps.

g) *Stem statements*

The Grade 1 teacher can provide sentence stems or beginnings as a prompt to key learners into prior knowledge and past experiences. This can be oral or written and can focus on issues and concepts, a scenario developed from the text to be read, attitudes and values. Class discussion of learner sentence stem completions may reveal which learners have little or no knowledge, and that all learners have an expectation of what they will learn about in the text.

h) *P.M.I*

When using this perennial strategy, a Grade 1 teacher may asks learners to consider the PLUS (positive), the MINUS (negative) and the INTERESTING responses they have to an idea or concept. Learners could write, speak or illustrate their responses.

i) KWL

This strategy to develop active reading of expository texts is based on the constructivist understanding that learners make new, or refine meanings in relation to what they already know or want to know. The letters in the acronym KWL stands for the following; **K** stands for what I know; **W** for what I want to know and **L** for what I have learnt. The **K** and **W** sections of this strategy need to take place before reading activities and **L** section is an evaluative after reading activities. In relation to literary texts, *KWL* is a useful strategy to use with texts which develop concepts, or which are information rich, or for when exploring a style or genre.

j) Supporting texts

When introducing longer or more sophisticated texts dealing with a specific concept, Grade 1 teachers can use simpler, shorter, more focused whole texts in activating and refining prior knowledge. Picture books and poems are especially useful. When the focus is on the study of themes, characters, style, abridged versions, retellings and filmed versions are effective in quickly establishing the plot outline with all learners in the class. This strategy easily and productively incorporates the use of other strategies in the before reading phase.

3.2.5.10 How to read and discuss texts

The Grade 1 teacher can use three ways to read and discuss texts, including reading books (Kurland, 2000:1-7). These revolve around different kinds of understanding that learners acquire as they read and discuss texts.

a) Restatement - an understanding of what the text tells the reader or what the text says. It basically involves restating the original information contained in the text. *Restatement is an attempt* to answer the question, "What does the text tell you?"

b) Description - this strategy deals with how information and ideas are introduced and developed in the text. It is a description of what the text does. A description gives an answer to the question, "What issues do the text discuss?"

- c) **Interpretation** - This strategy allows for an analysis of what a text means. The reader tries to find the deeper meaning of what the text entails. Interpretation is an attempt to answer the question, “What concerns underlie the text?”

Kurland (2000:4-5) gives an example of how to read a nursery rhyme in demonstrating the different understandings to be extracted from the text.

Mary had a little lamb (*Mary o ne a na le konyana*)

Its flees was as white as snow (*Boya ba yona bo le bosweu ba lehlwa*)

and everywhere Mary went (*mme hohle moo Mary a neng a ya*)

The lamb was sure to go (*Konyana e ne e mo sala morao ka botshepehi*)

A *restatement* would tell the reader about Mary and her lamb. Mary had a lamb that followed her everywhere. A *description* would give details about the story within the nursery rhyme. The nursery rhyme describes a pet that followed its mistress everywhere. The *interpretation* gives the meaning within the story, portraying an image of innocent devotion by lamb devotion to its mistress. The devotion is emphasised by repetition of the words, “everywhere” and “sure to go”. The notion of innocence is conveyed by the image of a young lamb, “white as snow”. The nursery rhyme asserts innocent devotion as a positive relationship.

Given that learners learn differently and construct meaning differently, based on their prior knowledge and how it is linked to new knowledge, it is possible that they can arrive at different interpretations when they read the same text. Of significance is that learners are able to support their interpretations by providing evidence from the text. When Grade 1 teachers consistently apply this strategy in developing learners’ reading skills they will be laying foundations for reading for meaning and for assisting learners to construct their own knowledge.

3.2.5.11 Strengths and limitations

Since the *text-based* approach is understood from the constructivist perspective, its advantages are also discussed from the constructivist perspective. Concept to Classroom (2004c:1-2) outlines the following strengths:

- a) Learners read more and enjoy reading more when they are actively involved, rather than passive readers.

Cooper (2001:5) states that narrative and expository texts captivate readers' attention and motivation and engage them in learning. In developing reading skills, they become enthusiastic as they are actively involved in reading, especially when they read from a wide variety of texts which match their interests and curiosity.

- b)** Reading works best when it concentrates on thinking and understanding, rather than on rote memorisation.

In developing learners' reading skills, learners' thinking is challenged because teachers encourage them to construct their own knowledge and read for understanding. This is evident when learners can formulate their own interpretations from reading different texts

- c)** Reading skill is transferable.

As teachers develop learners' reading skills in languages, learners are able to apply their skills to read texts in other learning areas, across the curriculum. These skills can also be applied in real life situations.

- d)** Learners are allowed to take ownership of what they learn, since learning is based on learners' questions and explorations.

Learners learn how to learn, implying that they are not permanently depended on their teachers to learn.

- e)** Social and communication skills are promoted by creating a classroom environment that emphasises collaboration and exchange of ideas.

As learners read and interpret texts they are able to share the information with their teachers and peers and thus improve on their communication skills which are vital in presenting ideas in a logical and coherent manner.

- f)** Learners are assisted to develop and expand their own language structures

The more learners are exposed to different types of texts the more they refine their language usage and use and consequently improve reading comprehension (Cooper, 2001:5).

The *text-based* approach has some limitations identified in its implementation. It does not have a clear structure that is clearly visible, as in the *phonic*, *look-and-say* and *language-experience* approaches. Due to the uniqueness of teachers in their selection and use of texts, the *text-based* approach places a heavy burden on teachers to develop their own curriculum (Reyhner, 2008:2). Some literary texts may

be too difficult for beginning readers who still lack skills and strategies to decode the words (Cooper, 2001:5). Teachers can use the *text-based* approach in conjunction with other approaches in order to overcome the above mentioned limitations.

3.2.5.12 Reflective thoughts

The discussion on the *text-based* approach is very detailed and complex, raising a serious question in respect to Grade 1 teachers' knowledge, competence and understanding regarding this approach, as well as the related strategies and methods linked to developing reading. How do the Grade 1 teachers use this approach to facilitate the development of reading skills, and if they do not, which ones do they use? Perhaps the in-depth situation analysis and the intervention will clarify the issue.

3.3 CONTEMPORARY READING APPROACHES AND METHODS

Several authors use new terminology in describing contemporary reading approaches and methods in developing reading skills. Abisamra (2007:3-5), Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008:88-89) and Wessels (2007:91-121) classify them into the three categories, examined in turn as follows.

3.3.1 Top down approach (concept-driven)

Similarly to the *spontaneous* approach, the *top down* approach encourages the Grade 1 teacher to focus on how the reader interacts with the text and the meaning s/he brings to it on the basis of her/his experiential background as well as how s/he interprets the text based on current/prior knowledge (Coltman & Place, 2013:104). Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008:88) refer to the *top down* approach as "meaning-giving theory". According to Wessels (2007:102-121) learning is facilitated when learners are able to connect their knowledge of the world with the knowledge in a text by means of top-down processes such as retelling text contents, prediction, completing paragraphs, finding information, Survey-Question-Read-Recite-Review (SQ3R), solving riddles, and many others. The approach to reading is synonymous with *whole language* approach, which came into existence to establish context and meaning in reading. Its use is supposed to circumvent memorisation and rote

learning and thus promotes meaningful learning (READ Educational Trust, 2008:19; Reyhner, 2008:2).

3.3.2 *Bottom up* approach (serial)

The *bottom up* approach may be understood to mean the same thing as *sequential* approaches and which emphasise decoding (Coltman & Place, 2013:104). With it, reading takes place when a reader can decode the meaning of a text by sounding out the printed words. According to Vacca *et al.* (2003:24) it is 'data-driven', as it is triggered by letters and words printed on the page. In using this approach, the Grade 1 teacher facilitates the development of her/his learners' reading skills by recognising letters and sounds which they have to combine to form words and to eventually arrive at the meaning intended by the author (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:25; READ Educational Trust, 2008:18). It is within this context that Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008:88) refer to it as "skills acquirement theory". Letter-recognition activities, word-recognition activities, synonym and antonym activities and cloze passages are ideal for developing the *bottom up* approach. Automatic decoding is essential in understanding what is being read because if learners decode easily, they read fluently at a reasonable speed, and when they read quickly they make sense of the print, unlike when words are read laboriously, which may cause them to lose the intended meaning of the sentences.

3.3.3 Interactive approach

Since the *top down* and *bottom up* approaches appear contradictory, a synthesis of the two balances the equation. The *interactive* approach is the product of merging the *top down* and *bottom up* approaches (Coltman & Place, 2013:105). READ Educational Trust (2008a:19) refers to the merging as the *combined approach*, concerned with the printed message and what a reader brings to the text by using both *top down* and *bottom up* skills (Abisamra, 2007:5; Vacca *et al.*, 2003:25). Wessels (2007:102) refers to the *interactive* approach as the reader's ability to understand and construct meanings from a text. In accordance to READ Educational Trust (2008a:20), the *interactive/combined* approach is highly suitable for developing

reading skills since it accommodates different learning styles of learners. These learning styles can be auditory, visual and kinaesthetic.

The use of newer concepts does not change the understanding of the reading approaches but adds relevance to the modern life worlds and the philosophy of life of the Grade 1 teachers. The teachers understand better when there is mention of the top down structures and bottom up structures in the way those terms influence managerial decision-making processes.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an exposition of the different reading approaches and methods, and how they impacted on developing reading. The traditional way of teaching reading was teacher-centred and encouraged memorisation and rote learning. Modern approaches and methods are learner-centred and encourage divergent, creative and critical thinking. In using contemporary approaches the teacher is placed in the position of a facilitator, who must equip learners with the decoding skills as well as those skills necessary to help them interpret what they are reading as they construct their own knowledge.

The discussion on the *text-based* approach provided new understanding about texts and their relevance in the facilitative role of the teacher in the development of reading skills. The use of texts is aimed at captivating learners' attention and curiosity while enhancing their knowledge and understanding. This knowledge is also vital for teachers in terms of exploiting those critical moments necessary for scaffolding.

The discussion of the reading approaches and methods also revealed how each approach was influenced by a specific learning theory. That learners have to construct their own meaning is sufficient motivation for teachers to embrace and adopt the constructivist way of learning. The teachers are encouraged to use reading strategies and methods that are relevant to enhancing constructivist principles.

In the next chapter is a discussion of different reading programmes employed in facilitating the development of reading skills.

CHAPTER 4

READING PROGRAMMES AT THE FOUNDATION PHASE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

When a Grade 1 child starts school at the beginning of the year, the parents expect her/him to learn to read and write at a basic level by the end of the year. A Grade 1 child brings cultural literacy acquired through environmental print, i.e., an ability to listen, speak, read and write, albeit not in the same way as adults (Excell & Linington, 2011:28; Harris & Smith, 1972:69; Seligmann, 2012:54; Trawick-Smith, 2010:283). This print encourages parents to be role models in helping their children understand written language and the cultural context in which they live (Jantjies, 2009:11; Michalowitz, 1993:18; Trawick-Smith, 2010:286; Vacca *et al.*, 2003:66). Michalowitz (1993:18-19) asserts that the most important thing about exposing children to written language is helping them understand the uses of written language and motivating them to deal with it, even if they cannot formally write.

The role of the Grade 1 teachers, therefore, is to facilitate the development of the learner's language and literacy skills. A prerequisite is for Grade 1 teachers to create a print-rich classroom environment with the necessary resources, materials and a variety of reading books which will ensure that learners are engaged in meaningful reading activities from the first day (Jantjies, 2009:64-65). Another prerequisite is for the teachers to possess the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes pertaining to reading programmes, approaches, skills, strategies and methods which can be studied from various books to prepare themselves for developing learners' reading skills. In so doing, they will be able to assist learners to use reading to obtain meaning from print, give them all frequent and intensive opportunities to read, allow them to practice regular spelling-sound relationships, learn about the nature of the alphabetic writing system, and understand the structure of spoken words (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998:3).

A reading programme is a necessity in order to systematically organise and package the development of reading skills and to show and maintain progression. It also provides for the development of reading skills in a meaningful, well-planned structure that is well integrated with other language skills. This chapter explores the meaning of a reading programme, to determine which types are relevant to effective facilitation of the development of reading skills in Grade 1. It focuses on programmes predominantly used in facilitating the development of reading skills in Sesotho over the past few decades, the Molteno Project's *Breakthrough to Literacy (BTL)* and READ included. A discussion on how to employ various reading programmes and to apply different reading strategies and skills pivots on lesson planning and preparation. In this chapter, the researcher will determine whether Grade 1 teachers experience problems that might have been barriers to facilitating the development of reading skills and how those problems could be resolved.

4.2 READING PROGRAMMES

BTL and READ can be regarded as reading programmes primarily because they are designed to increase the learners' reading achievement. A reading programme which is not supported by a language-rich environment fails to yield excellent results (Wessels, 2007:122). The *BTL* and READ prioritise the necessary materials, books, training, support and monitoring at all the schools in which they were piloted, and both focus on developing the four pre-reading skills of phonological awareness, letter identification, vocabulary development and learners' ability to recall and retell sentences and stories (Schacter, 1999). A reading programme should serve as a blueprint for teachers to develop phonics, decoding, sight word vocabulary and comprehension skills in the most systematic, direct and explicit way. The teachers must provide learners with ample opportunities to learn how to understand texts (Diamond & Mandel, 1995; Schacter, 1999). For Schacter (1999) an effective reading programme is driven by reading research not ideology, with direct, systematic, intensive, and sustained reading instruction that requires the whole school's support before it is adopted. Initial intensive professional development is extended to follow-up training by the developer throughout the school year, making highly effective use of instructional time, providing multiple reading opportunities and employing a variety

of reading assessments. It requires the school's commitment to the integrity of the programme's instructional approach and materials.

Diamond and Mandel (1995) and Schacter (1999) believe that a successful reading programme bases instruction on accurate diagnostic information; develops print concepts and knowledge of letter names and shapes; conveys an understanding that spoken words are composed of sounds (phonemic awareness) and that letters correspond to these sounds; provides systematic and explicit instruction in sound / symbol relationship (phonics); connects that instruction to practice in highly decodable text that contain the sounds and symbols taught; and makes use of rich and varied literature. The teacher should read to or with the children regularly, through choral reading, partnered reading and individual reading, and provide explicit teaching of comprehension strategies such as summarisation, prediction, drawing inferences, asking questions and monitoring the reading.

The features discussed above imply that a reading programme should not be imposed on the basis of the existing economic or political system, but rather should be the result of thorough research. It has to be negotiated with role players at all levels and can only be adopted for implementation when they have reached consensus. Central to its implementation is the promise that intensive professional development will receive top priority to entrench commitment of all role players to the integrity of the programme's instructional approach and materials.

4.2.1 Reading programme in the National Curriculum Statement

In considering the salient features of a reading programme it can be argued that the NCS did not prescribe a specific reading programme from its first implementation as C2005. Prior to that, some research was conducted into what makes an effective educational system, however, the universities, which are centres of excellence with regard to research, did not play a significant role in the design of the C2005/NCS or its implementation (Hoadley & Jansen, 2002:198). The NCS was primarily driven by a political ideology of the new government (Jansen & Taylor, 2003:38) that demanded it be aligned with the emerging global educational trends. Nonetheless, or consequently, its implementation was applauded for ushering in significant changes

in the education system. The waves of change brought about by global educational trends were dictating a paradigm shift away from behaviouristic, teacher-centred modes of learning towards constructivist, critical and learner-centred ones.

The NCS drew on the principles of OBE, with emphasis on outcomes and assessment standards. The learning area statements and the learning programmes were also prominent features of the NCS. However, development of the learning programmes, which could have served as the basis for developing a reading programme, was left in the teachers' hands. The NCS's Languages Learning programme did not meet the criteria of Schacter (1999), providing no direct, systematic, intensive or sustained reading instruction. The facilitation of the development of reading skills thus proved difficult for teachers and throughout the implementation of the NCS, the Department of Education failed to provide adequate training, resulting in an apparent lack of commitment to the integrity of the programme's instructional approach and materials (Jansen & Taylor, 2003:3; Ramabenyane, 2000:176-177). Provision by the Department of Education of policy documents outlining guidelines to assist teachers to develop their own unique learning programmes proved to be a futile exercise, primarily because teachers were not given proper guidance on how to design learning programmes. It is apparent that the NCS failed to provide a framework in which teachers could explicitly develop phonemic awareness, letter and word recognition, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency. Nor was provision made to acquaint teachers with comprehension strategies such as prediction, summarisation, drawing inferences, asking questions, confirming, elaborating, monitoring one's reading, and drawing conclusions. These strategies are crucial for facilitating the development of reading skills.

Emerging from the discussion above is that lack of a reading programme contributed to the many problems teachers encountered in the implementation of the NCS.

4.2.2 Balanced language and literacy programme in the NCS

Although the NCS did not have a reading programme, the Department of Education (DoE, 2002b:9) claims to have adopted a balanced language and literacy programme (BLP) based on the premise that learners' emergent literacy should serve as a starting point for developing reading; that learners should read real books and write

for genuine purposes; and that they should be helped to pay attention to phonics. BLP strives to develop all four language skills simultaneously and holistically, by balancing the *phonic* and the *look-and-say* approaches, ensuring balance of support for learners, of reading methodologies, and of explicit teaching and learner activities (READ, 2006b:16).

In practice, the development of reading and writing should encourage and support learners to read widely, use opportunities for writing and developing their vocabulary and language, and discover and use techniques and strategies that ‘unlock’ the code of the written word. Although the DoE (2002b:9) has adopted the BLP it does not give specifications on how it should be implemented in the teaching of reading. READ Educational Trust (READ, 2008a:42), however, stipulates that it should be based on the four reading methodologies of *Shared Reading and Writing*; *Group and Guided Reading and Writing*; *Independent Reading and Writing*; and *Reading Aloud*. These reading methodologies were made popular by READ Educational Trust and are commonly referred to as ‘READ methodologies’, a detailed explanation of which follows in the discussion of the READ programme.

The BLP can be identified by six features. Firstly, it is text-based, the text being used as the starting point and a means to provide the context for language teaching and learning. Secondly, it pivots on the four methodologies, which focus on different aspects of literacy that can be used with a range of different learners having different strengths and responding to different methods differently. Thirdly, all language skills are integrated and balanced, and are taught in the context of a story or theme. It balances support and independence, its methodologies moving from highly supported reading and writing to peer-supported reading and writing, then towards independent reading and writing. Fourthly, it is NCS compliant, though while the NCS clearly states what learners have to learn the BLP can be used to develop the learners’ reading skills in such a way that they can demonstrate achievement of the Assessment Standards contained in the NCS. Fifthly, it is not language-specific. Sixthly, it can be used with any language (READ Educational Trust, 2008a:44-45).

Its success is premised on a belief that learners read for meaning by integrating three approaches to the teaching of reading, namely *top down*, *bottom up* and

apprenticeship. It also enhances the development of three different bodies of knowledge, namely semantic (general knowledge), syntactic (knowledge of language patterns) and graphophonic (knowledge of letters, sounds and words). It also caters for different learning styles such as auditory (hearing), visual (seeing) and kinaesthetic (doing) (READ Educational Trust, 2008a:18- 20 & 34).

The BLP negates rote learning, which is characterised by memorisation of letters and words without attaching any meaning to them. This may be equated to the concept of 'barking at print', that is when a reader can read a text fluently but does not show any understanding of it (Wessels, 2007:89).

Although the DoE claims to have adopted the BLP it did not specify how it should provide a framework for developing reading skills. The implementation of the Foundations for Learning Campaign (FfLC) (Republic of South Africa (RSA) Government Gazette Number 30880, 2008), however, revealed its intention to move in the direction of adopting a reading programme whilst maintaining the core features of the NCS.

4.2.3 Foundations for Learning Campaign as a reading programme

The FfLC was a four-year intervention strategy and an enrichment programme for the advancement of Literacy and Numeracy at the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, with an expectation of increasing average learner performance to no less than 50%. Its literacy programme originated in the READ programme, including its reading methodologies of *Shared Reading*, *Group Reading*, *Guided Reading* and *Independent Reading* (RSA Government Gazette Number 30880, 2008:4-5). Since the launch of the FfLC was intended to bring significant improvements to learners' development of reading skills it was neither conceptualised as a new curriculum to replace the NCS nor as a reading programme. However, it did meet some of the requirements of a reading programme, as discussed in this chapter (4:4.2). Its literacy aspect was driven by reading research not ideology and emphasised direct, systematic, intensive, and sustained reading instruction by specifying content and how it should be taught. Nonetheless, it did not meet the other requirements, such as

supporting initial intensive professional development and then extending follow-up training by the DoE throughout its four-year span.

As an enrichment reading programme, the FfLC provided a framework for developing reading skills, giving clear specifications on how to maximise integration of the reading components. It also introduced a new concept, milestones, conceptualised from the learning outcomes and assessment standards in the NCS, though not replacing them. As indicators of the expected level of learners' reading achievement at the end of each term (DoE, 2008i:4), the FfLC prescribed the following milestones for the development of literacy in the Foundation Phase:

- **Oral:** integrate LO1 and LO 2
- **Reading and Phonics:** integrate LO 3, LO 5 and LO 6
- **Writing and Handwriting:** integrate LO 4, LO 5 and LO 6.

The DoE suggested daily teacher and learner activities in the implementation of the FfLC (DoE, 2008i, 5; RSA Government Gazette Number 30880, 2008).

4.2.3.1 Oral work (10 minutes per day)

Oral work is focussed on listening and speaking, with the teacher guiding learners to talk about the following topics: how they are feeling; what is their news based on their personal experiences; and what are the important events based on one of the following charts: Day, Month, Birthday, and Weather.

4.2.3.2 Shared Reading or Shared Writing (15 minutes per day)

The following activities are recommended: sing a song, or recite a poem or refer to a vocabulary chart if appropriate; introduce the text and new vocabulary; draw out learners' prior knowledge; read the text, modelling a reading strategy, e.g., predicting, using illustrations, noticing punctuation, reading different types of text; read the text with the learners joining in, using shared reading techniques, or write a short text using shared writing techniques; check understanding and encourage learners to respond to the text through focused questions.

4.2.3.3 Word and Sentence level work (15 minutes per day)

The following activities are recommended in the FfLC:

Phonics/spelling: recite a rhyme (phonemic awareness); learners listen for target sound; teach the new letter-sound or word family in context (shared text); reinforce with a directed oral activity, e.g., a game, a sorting or matching activity.

Sight words: show the word in context (shared text) and out of context (flashcard, board). Reinforce spelling, meaning and use, e.g., 'writing' it in the air, using it.

Vocabulary: find the target words in shared text; revise the meanings; reinforce understanding by, for example, learners making their own oral sentences with the words, make up riddles.

Language: teach language item in context (shared text), reinforce with directed oral activity such as making own sentences, substitution tables.

4.2.3.4 Group, Guided and independent Reading and/or Writing (30 minutes per day)

Learners work individually, in pairs or in groups, to complete a written activity based on the class work, e.g., drawing a picture and writing a caption about the story, completing a simple comprehension, writing daily news, sentence completion, copying words into personal dictionaries, matching words, filling in words. They read graded readers or small versions of the shared text and complete a worksheet.

4.2.3.5 Guided Reading

The teacher engages other groups of learners in *Group, Guided and Independent Reading and/or Writing* while the teacher is busy with groups of same-ability learners in guided reading. They read a text at their developmental level. The teacher uses the opportunity to revise reading skills and strategies already taught as, for example, sight words, sounding out, predication. S/he listens for fluency and checks reading for meaning by asking questions.

4.2.3.6 Handwriting

The learners are assisted to copy writing patterns, letter formation, words and sentences.

4.2.3.7 Writing

Learners are given a writing frame using a shared text as a model and do own writing, e.g., list, message, recipe, story.

4.2.3.8 First additional language (10 minutes per day)

If learners are to use this language as the LoLT further on, use the same reading methodologies of *Shared Reading*, *Word* and *Sentence level* work to introduce the new language and, after the first six months of Grade 1, literacy in the new language.

4.2.3.9 Reading for enjoyment (30 minutes per day)

The teacher and learners read a book of their own choice.

4.2.3.10 Lesson plan exemplars for the implementation of FfLC

In order to make the implementation of the FfLC easy, the DoE (2008b:6) provided teachers with policy documents containing lesson plan exemplars for the first, second, third and fourth terms. These were intended to help them pace their teaching, give them guidance when planning their assessment tasks and provide suggestions to enrich teaching practice. The lessons for the week were broken down into daily steps providing teachers with suggestions for implementation (DoE, 2008b:7-8). The newly implemented Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) sought to refine these features into an organised reading programme.

4.2.4 The implementation of Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)

The implementation of Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was heralded by the FfLC which served the purpose of orientating the teachers around the concept of a reading programme and what it entails (Chapter 4:4.2.3). The CAPS documents for the Languages share many characteristics with the FfLC in terms of giving specifications regarding what content to be taught when and how it should be done. CAPS is embraced in the *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12* which represents a policy statement for learning and teaching in South African schools to ensure that all learners acquire and apply knowledge, skills and values in local and global contexts (Department of Basic Education (DoBE), 2011a:1-4; DoBE, 2011b:1-

4). Each approved school subject, like Sesotho, has its own CAPS document which emphasises an integrated approach to language teaching and learning. Each CAPS document outlines time allocation for each subject in each phase. The Foundation Phase comprises four subjects namely; Home Language (HL), First Additional Language (FAL), Mathematics and Life skills. HL in Grade 1 is allocated a maximum of eight hours per week which should flexibly cover the development of listening and speaking skills (45 minutes), reading and phonics (4 hours and 30 minutes), handwriting (1 hour) and writing (45 minutes). The requirements for the development of Reading are divided into *Shared Reading* and *Shared Writing*, *Group Guided Reading*, *Paired / Independent Reading*, and *Phonics* and *Phonemic Awareness*. In addition to the above, CAPS documents for the HL also emphasise that the development of reading skills should be carried out within the following five components namely, phonemic awareness, word recognition, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency. The CAPS documents also specify what formal assessment activities need to be carried out daily, weekly and per term (DoBE, 2011a:8-10; 14).

The difference between CAPS and the FfLC lies in a shift away from outcomes, assessment standards and milestones in the FfLC towards the use of language skills in CAPS. Although the same language skills were formulated as the six learning outcomes (Chapter 2:2.3.3) and were reflected in the assessment standards (Chapter 2:2.3.4) and milestones (Chapter 4:4.2.3) in the FfLC, in CAPS documents listening and speaking skills are coupled while reading is coupled with phonics. The development of phonics in the NCS did not receive much attention as it is happening in CAPS. In FfLC, Writing was formulated as an independent LO 4 while in CAPS it is coupled with Handwriting so as to achieve their integrated development. In the FfLC LOs 5 and 6 (Thinking and reasoning and Language structure and use) were each regarded as separate LOs. However, in CAPS, the same skills must be integrated into the four basic language skills and developed holistically (DoBE, 2011a:8; DoBE, 2011b:8).

The point that must be highlighted here is that CAPS was implemented at the schools in 2012. However, the selected Grade 1 teachers, with whom the researcher collaborated in accomplishing the intervention in this study, attended CAPS training workshops in 2011 (Chapter 8:8.2.5; 8.3). This situation made it possible for the

researcher to integrate some of the concepts used in CAPS documents in formulating the guidelines for implementing the intervention.

4.3 MOLTENO PROJECT AND *BREAKTHROUGH TO LITERACY*

Breakthrough to Literacy (BTL) arose from the Molteno Project, which was named after the *Molteno Brothers Trust*, its major donor. Originally developed in England by the Schools Council and spread to other countries, it is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) research and development project that began in 1975 at Rhodes University at the Institute for the study of English in Africa (Molteno Project 1998: vi Rodseth, 2002:97). The purpose was to train teachers in learner-centred methods, establish local, school-based training programmes with ongoing support for teachers and provide language education that would equip Foundation Phase learners to learn through the medium of English at higher levels in school, college or vocational training.

The Molteno Project's endeavours to achieve its purpose resulted in the *BTL* in English. The first year of implementation of the *BTL*, although proven to be successful, was flawed by Grade 1-3 learners' failure in becoming competent in English as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The area of major concern was in reading, and the founders realised the need to address this with the aim of suggesting possible solutions and presenting alternatives (Molteno Project 1998: vi Rodseth, 2002:97). Rodseth (2002:97) states that research conducted in this area indicated that the failure to read in English was caused by the learners' incompetence in reading in the African languages. A decision was thus taken in 1976 to embark on literacy in African languages, hence *Breakthrough to isiXhosa/ isiZulu/ Sesotho/ Setswana*. These courses were developed on the basis of the English *Breakthrough* courses. The African languages courses proved to have a rich vocabulary and sentence structures with which learners were familiar from their home environments. Other benefits of using the learners' home languages were cognitive, psychological, sociological and cultural, factors which made *BTL* in African Languages a success (Rodseth, 2002:97-98).

To avoid redundancy it was vital to ensure that the *BTL* courses kept up with new developments within the education spectrum. The implementation of C2005 and

subsequently the RNCS, within the OBE paradigm, necessitated *BTL* adapting its materials accordingly. Evidence of this lies can be found in the reflection of its principles in the new OBE paradigm (Rodseth, 2002:101). *BTL* relied on research to continually improve on the practice and to ensure that the programme maintained a high quality curriculum that would ensure improved performance in developing reading (McGraw-Hill *Breakthrough to Literacy*, 2004:1).

4.3.1 *Breakthrough to Literacy* as a reading programme

BTL is a reading programme designed for the development of Foundation Phase learners' reading and writing skills in their home language at Grade 1. It is a language, literacy and communication programme based on the *language-experience* approach and focuses on skills in listening and speaking that learners have already acquired from home as a prerequisite for developing reading and writing skills. In the *BTL* programme, the teachers create opportunities in which Grade 1 learners write their own material by dictating stories in their own speech patterns using their own vocabulary. It is learner-centred because learners are given opportunities to participate in the process of constructing their own knowledge while affirming the teacher's role as a facilitator. *BTL* is also an outcomes-based programme that focuses on helping learners to demonstrate knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes in accordance with specified outcomes (Molteno Project, 1998:vi-vii; Rodseth, 2002:98).

BTL is unique in giving teachers intensive training and mentoring. In addition, teachers who implement it are also provided with the Teacher's Manual, which contains notes of which Grade 1 teachers should take cognisance as they embark on developing reading through the programme (Molteno Project, 1998:30-35, 53, 55-57, 59).

4.3.2 *Breakthrough to Literacy* model

The functionality of the *BTL* reading programme is determined by the Classroom Instructional Model (McGraw Hill *Breakthrough to Literacy*, 2004:1), which reinforces the teacher's active role in the teaching and learning situation. Within this model, the

teacher is responsible for maintaining balance between instruction and management in Grade 1 classes, necessary for the effectiveness and success of facilitation of the development of reading skills.

4.3.3 Special features of the *Breakthrough to Literacy* reading programme

BTL boasts two special features, namely the *language-experience* approach and the composition of sentences before learners learn to write. It also has as the basic principle which guides the *Breakthrough* method and the *Breakthrough* Kit (Molteno Project, 1998:1&6). The *language-experience* approach was discussed in depth in Chapter 3 (3.2.4), and this chapter examines how it can be applied in the development of reading skills.

4.3.3.1 *Language-experience approach*

Application of the *language-experience* approach helps learners to understand that reading activities in the form of spelling, oral work, writing and reading are considered as different. As a learner-centred approach, all learners are afforded opportunities to be themselves and gradually understand that the core of learning to read lies in discovering that they can change whatever they say to the teacher, or vice versa, into written form. Learners also discover that the meaning they intended may be understood or misunderstood by the person reading, as in the spoken form. The facilitative role of the teacher in developing reading skills necessitates listening very carefully to a learner telling about her/his experience, her/his home, and what s/he sees in a picture (depending on the text the teacher has selected). S/he then catches a key sentence which s/he turns into print on word card. That key sentence carries the new vocabulary related to a particular lesson. S/he captures every word the learner says and builds them up in printed form, allowing the learner to gain confidence in developing her/his own printed messages. The more oral speech is turned into written speech the easier understanding language becomes (Molteno Project, 1998:3).

Teachers using the *BTL* programme need to focus both on decoding and meaning construction. Of significance here is that teachers maximise the knowledge learners bring into the classroom and their lived experiences as a starting point for learning to

read. Seemingly, teachers develop the four language skills in an integrated way and in context, hence, the *BTL* programme can be said to be a balanced reading programme. The teachers' activities help the learners to see reading as a meaningful activity primarily because they are based on life experiences.

4.3.3.2 Basic principle guiding the Breakthrough to Literacy programme

The Molteno Project (1998:1) maintains that the *Breakthrough* method is a means through which learners can read fluently and write easily in their own home language. Teachers, as facilitators, gradually introduce learners to the written language which originates from what they say about their experiences. Learners soon realise that what they read is actually a written representation of the knowledge they already possess. The development of reading skills is facilitated through the following steps:

- The teacher leads the learner to recall an experience in her/his mind, for example, *Mme o pheha dijo. (Mother cooks food.)*
- The learner tells about this experience in spoken language.
- The teacher assists the learner to turn what s/he has said into language by selecting cards on which words and part of words are printed.
- The learner can now read what s/he has said.

These four steps, which are the core business of developing reading skills through the use of the *language-experience* approach, reflect the facilitative role of the teacher. In the *BTL* programme, teachers contextualise the development of reading skills by bringing to life the subject knowledge relating to the reading and the reading processes (Chapter 2:2.2).

4.3.3.3 Composing sentences before learning to write

Composing sentences before writing them down simply means that teachers develop learners' reading skills before they focus on their writing skills, largely because Grade 1 learners find it difficult to write from the onset, without intensive practice. As learners compose sentences they learn the following about language:

- a) They develop an understanding that sentences are made up of separate words with separate spaces between them, e.g., *Papadi ya bolo ya mohope wa lefatshe e bapalla Aforika Borwa ka selemo sa 2010*. (The football world cup will be hosted in South Africa in the year 2010.). Although the sentence is relatively long, it is assumed to be within any child's life experience in South Africa in 2010. This is also to break the monotony of the sentence *Lesea le a lla* (The child is crying).
- b) They realise that words too are made up of separate parts, for example, prefixes and suffixes. *mohope* (cup) = (prefix) mo- + (stem) -hope, *lefatshe* (world) = (prefix) le- + (stem) -fatshe.
- c) They become aware that words are made up of syllables (when a word is segmented after every vowel) and letters, for example *mohope* = mo - ho - pe (syllables) and letters m - o - h - o - p - e.
- d) Learners also learn that the direction of reading and writing is from left to right in a line and from top to bottom (Molteno Project, 1998:4-5).

This feature of the *BTL* reading programme supports the development of the five components of developing reading skills, namely, phonemic and phonological awareness, word recognition, vocabulary development, fluency and comprehension (Chapter 2:2.2.3). It also highlights the interrelatedness of the *top down* (meaning-driven) and *bottom up* (decoding) approaches, as well as the whole language / interactive (combination) approaches in a real classroom situation (Chapter 3:3.4).

4.3.3.4 Breakthrough to Literacy kit

According to McGraw Hill, the *Breakthrough to Literacy* (2004:1) is a "scientifically-based conceptual framework" which uses a classroom instructional model and instructional materials. As indicated above, one of the key aims of the *BTL* is to provide teachers and learners with the materials necessary for its smooth implementation. According to Molteno Project (1998:6-11), the kit comprises the teacher' sentence maker, word cards and sentence holder, the learner' sentence maker, word cards, sentence holder and storybook. Other items included are the word store, conversation posters, phonic posters and *Breakthrough* readers. Additional materials included in the newer packages comprise teacher guides for each *Book-of-the-Week* or *Featured Book* and guides for working with

Breakthrough's curriculum and classroom management tools (McGraw Hill *Breakthrough to Literacy*, 2004:1-2).

The discussion above provides evidence that the *BTL* reading programme has always taken seriously book provision and other resources necessary to enhancing facilitation of the development of reading skills.

4.3.4 Stages of the *Breakthrough* reading programme

The *BTL* reading programme unfolds in three stages which outline different teaching and learning activities, laying strong emphasis on the teacher's facilitative role. The teacher arranges her/his learners into four social groups, which first work together as learning task groups with the focus on writing activities (simple copying exercises) such as writing patterns, letters of the alphabet, where to start when writing a letter, letter confusions as in **b** and **d**, and spacing between words (Molteno Project, 1998:12,32). The teacher facilitates this part to orientate all the learners about what they are supposed to be doing while s/he takes one group to the teaching corner.

These learning task groups are created specifically to keep them busy while the teacher is with the teaching group. The teacher ensures that all groups rotate, in order to ensure that each has an opportunity to be the teaching group. It is in the teaching groups that the teacher applies the four steps of the basic principle (see 4.3.3.2). Throughout the three stages the teacher must prepare thoroughly for each learning activity and make sure that s/he has all the materials ready.

4.3.4.1 Teacher's role in Stage 1

The teacher goes through 15 learning activities, designed to guide learners to learn to read the first group of words, the prefix cards and to make sentences with them in the teacher's sentence maker (Molteno Project, 1998:24-29). From *Stage 1* of the *BTL* reading programme, the teacher encourages learners to talk about their own experiences related to their families, based on the conversation poster, e.g., *The Home*. As the learners communicate they learn to understand the dynamics of family life and how they are part of it. The teacher writes their sentences and they begin to see that they learn to construct meaningful sentences and make use of them for communicative purposes. Learners are encouraged to read their sentences, but

before they write their own they are encouraged to draw a picture to illustrate the meaning of the sentence, which they will later write in their books.

At the end of *Stage 1* the teacher will have introduced learners to several key sentences which, through repetition and drill, they can understand, read and copy into their story books. The teacher will show them how these can be divided into words, syllables and letters then follows the same procedure to teach the other key sentences based on *The Home* conversation poster. To reinforce understanding, revision should be a daily activity, which comes before and after each learning activity. Teachers must make sure that any mess is tidied up after each lesson.

The last activity of *Stage 1* is assessment of learners on the scale ranging from *below average*, *average*, *above average*, and *merit* (Molteno Project, 1998:29). Through this assessment the teacher is able to place the learners in the appropriate groups according to their performance.

In considering the role of the teacher at this stage, on the one hand it seems to be very teacher-centred. This may defeat the purpose of a learner-centred approach which the *BTL* reading programme proclaims. On the other hand, it can be argued that the teacher plays a more active role in this early stage to scaffold learning, to lay solid foundations for further learning and to bring to life learner-talk. Learner-talk is a crucial aspect in assisting learners to develop their thinking and understanding of the text (Washtell, 2008b:62). The teacher also helps learners to decode, but this happens within context, not in isolation. The teacher enhances phonemic awareness and word recognition as s/he directs each learner to say each word and emphasises the separateness of words.

4.3.4.2 Teacher's role in Stage 2

The teacher guides the learners through a variety of activities which show progression from simple towards advanced activities. It is guaranteed that by the end of *Stage 2* most learners, with the exception of a few slower ones, will be able to make sentences with their own sentence maker. Some sentences will be each learner's original work, already written in the story book (Molteno Project, 1998:15 & 36). It is in *Stage 2* that the teacher introduces reading, starting by reading the

stories to the learners who then gradually take turns to choose a book from their class library and read to other learners. According to the Molteno Project (1998:45 & 59) the highlight of *Stage 2* is when the teacher introduces reading of the *Breakthrough* reader to the learners, using the following three important steps:

- Step 1: *Prepares for reading*: The teacher and learners look at the title of the story and at the pictures and discuss what they see. S/he guides the learners to bring what they already know into the story.
- Step 2: *Performs the reading act*: The teacher reads and the learners silently follow the story with her. S/he asks questions to urge learners to think ahead and to make guesses about what will happen next.
- Step 3: *Allows learners to read*: Learner reads to the teacher and her/his group. Learners read in pairs and silently.

These reading activities should be followed by a discussion of the story and questions to stimulate understanding.

In *Stage 2*, the teacher effectively integrates the language skills in a lesson, applying a combination of reading strategies such as, picture walk, predicting and activating learners' prior knowledge. As s/he reads aloud to learners, s/he uses a questioning technique to challenge learners' thinking (Washtell, 2008b:63). The *BTL* reading programme is meant to encourage the use of some of the reading methodologies, such as *Reading Aloud*, *Paired Reading* and *Independent Reading*.

4.3.4.3 Teacher's role in Stage 3

At the end of *Stage 3*, the teacher will have helped learners to acquire the basic language skills which form the foundation of communication. At this stage emphasis is laid on the integration of the four language skills, with the learners demonstrating the ability to retell a story that the teacher has told and able to add their own ideas, choose a book from the class library which they will read with partners, and read more advanced readers (Molteno Project, 1998:18 & 61).

According to Kurland (2000:3), retelling a story is a useful strategy in making meaning of the text. However, retelling a story is only the beginning of reading for

meaning. Learners require enough practice to discuss and interpret the texts. It is recommended that as teachers introduce more advanced readers they use the *Shared Reading* approach. However, there is no explanation of what it is and how teachers should use it in the Teacher's Guide. Consequently, teachers may disregard the recommendation. *Shared Reading, Reading Aloud, Group Reading, Guided Reading* and *Independent Reading* will receive attention later in this chapter.

4.3.5 Advantages of *BTL* reading programme

Since there is a close link between the *BTL* reading programme and the language-experience approach, the advantages that apply to one also apply to the other. In addition, the *BTL* reading programme paves the way for development of the main languages in their own right and for the transference of conceptual and cognitive skill into English at later grades (Rodseth, 2002:103). This has proven successful in improving learners' reading competence.

4.3.6 Limitations of the *BTL* reading programme

The discussion on the limitations of the language-experience approach also holds true for the *BTL* reading programme (Chapter 3:3.3.4.3). Rodseth (2002:104) adds to the list the following disadvantages. Teachers tend to revert to a teacher-centred approach even though the Teacher's Guide and learners' materials are clearly designed for learner-centred, task-based activities. There is a lack of funds for re-orientating teachers to a radical transformation from teacher-centred to learner-centred approaches. Teachers often put more emphasis on teaching grammar. There is inadequate marketing of the many African language materials, particularly readers, which do exist, in spite of a widespread notion that they are unavailable.

Gillis-Carlebach (1993:91) adds an international dimension to the limitations of the *BTL* programme, maintaining that the words used by the learners are often of low frequency and reflect the personal experience of a single child. Content is also personal. Another limitation of the *BTL* reading programme is that it inhibits flexibility and creativity on the teacher's part. Every step is outlined in minute detail and does

not allow teachers to bring their own innovative ideas. The implication is that teachers only follow the procedures dictated by the *BTL* reading programme.

Ramabenyane's (2000:199) research findings, on the implementation of the *BTL* reading programme at Grade 1 indicate that it has proved successful in developing reading skills. However, the major problem was that it was limited to Grade 1 classes, leaving Grades 2 and 3 teachers untrained and without appropriate resources. Another disadvantage was that it was piloted at selected schools.

In consideration of these limitations, the *BTL* reading programme did not make a significant contribution in improving African learners' reading skills because it was piloted at a few schools and did not reach all the learners. The reading programme was implemented at only a few pilot schools and only at Grade 1. The programme is still to be extended (depending on availability of funds) throughout the phases of the General Education and Training Band.

4.4 ORIGINS OF READ EDUCATIONAL TRUST

Read Educational Trust, similar to the Molteno Project, is an NGO, and was registered in 1979. It is funded by the South African private sector and foreign donors with the purpose of providing teacher development and ensuring that books are accessible to all South Africans. READ Educational Trust's aim is to research, develop and deliver comprehensive language and literacy programmes, which include teacher training, materials provision and monitoring for primary and high schools (READ, 2006a:2; READ, 2006b:7). Its mission statement is to "help people throughout South Africa to develop their reading, writing, learning, information and communication skills so that they can become independent lifelong learners" (READ, 2006b:6). The READ literacy programmes are built on the belief that reading programmes are child-centred, reading and writing for meaning is paramount, reading must always be rewarding, learning to read is learnt by reading, teaching reading is primarily a teacher's task, and children need to learn strategies in order to apply skills appropriately (READ, 2006b:12; READ, 2006a:8).

READ also adapted its materials and training courses to be compliant with C2005 and the NCS in order to maintain its relevance and viability. The adapted materials and training courses reflect the belief that children acquire knowledge through interactions with other learners, teachers, family members and the entire community, that learners are active participants as they learn what is meaningful to them, and that learning programmes must respond to the educational needs of the learners (READ, 2006b:12; READ, 2006a:3).

4.4.1 READ balanced language programme

A balanced language and literacy programme has been discussed above (4.2.2). READ takes pride in the knowledge that it employs the *BLP* in enhancing language and literacy acquisition of the learners. The four language skills are developed holistically. READ integrates various teaching methods and materials which suit the diverse needs of learners (READ, 2006b:16; READ, 2006a:8). Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008:94) clarify that *BLP* is not a reading method but a way of orientating teachers in developing reading and general literacy.

4.4.2 Provision of books

As with the *BTL* reading programme, the READ programme considers familiarising children with books as critical to enriching the child's metalanguage and the ability to talk explicitly about language (Raved, 1993:27). Metalanguage, being a component of metacognition, occurs when an adult (educator) engages a child (learner) in a conversation and reads a book to her/him. According to Raved (1993:27), reading books to children should be a source of enjoyment, and the availability and accessibility of real books in a classroom is a cornerstone of literacy development. The success story behind READ's programme lies in its emphasis on provision of reading books, both fiction and non-fiction. Its popular *book flood* approach entails supplying real books to the classrooms (READ, 2006a:38; READ, 2006b:31), a strategy introduced to acquaint learners to learn language through reading books, and which Nation (2004:48) terms "meaning-focused incidental learning" in contrast to direct language teaching he refers to as "intentional language-focused learning".

READ recommends the use of Big Books to provide teachers the opportunity to share the print and illustrations with a group of children in class by finger-pointing or using a pointer. Finger-pointing is essential for developing the skills to recognize letter, syllable and word and to understand the language of a story (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998:181; Wessels, 2007:136). They refer to the Big Books as “oversized storybooks” which have a big print all learners can see. This print is rich in rhyme, rhythm and repetition.

The Big Books and the Small Books are ideal for applying *Shared Reading* and *Writing*, *Reading Aloud*, *Group* and *Guided Reading* and *Independent Reading* and *Writing*. They play a significant role in helping the teachers to develop the themes and subject knowledge, and instil a sense of confidence in the learners (READ, 2006a:31). Learners are encouraged to read books to enhance their ability to read quickly and with ease, integrate the development of speaking, reading and writing skills in a holistic way, stimulate their cognitive, linguistic, affective and social growth, develop different bodies of knowledge namely graphophonic, semantic and syntactic, strengthen the development of attitudes, values, information skills and thinking skills and enhance reading for enjoyment (READ, 2006a:39).

4.4.3 Partnership between READ and the Free State Department of Education

Prior to the launch of the FfLC, each province was mandated to design its own literacy strategy. The Free State Province Department of Education awarded READ Educational Trust a tender to drive its Literacy Strategy. READ Educational Trust had to orientate the officials of the DoE about the Literacy Strategy and train them to manage and deliver the strategy to the School Management Team (SMT) and the teachers for its implementation and sustainability (READ Educational Trust, 2008a:35). The teachers also had to be provided with the appropriate resources and were expected to understand and apply the prescribed READ methodologies (READ Educational Trust, 2010:41). The Deputy Director of the Foundation Phase in the Free State Province had knowledge about the dynamics pertaining to the Literacy Strategy. In an interview held on the 17th of February 2010, which was conducted to determine the status quo at the primary schools with regard to improving reading, she attested that the training had not materialised as expected. She mentioned that

the launch of the FfLC, which strongly supported READ programme, resulted in Molteno Project withdrawing its support from those schools they had been subsidising.

4.5 READING METHODOLOGIES

The terms 'methodology' and 'strategy' are often used interchangeably when referring to reading methodologies, however, for the purpose of this study the former is preferred, to avoid confusion. The researcher prefers the term 'reading methodologies' instead of 'READ methodologies' as it includes those methodologies that are not READ's intellectual property. READ Educational Trust conducted research on the different reading methodologies that can be used in facilitating the development of reading skills and published several booklets on them. These reading methodologies were then made popular in the South African context and are commonly referred to as READ methodologies. In subsequent sections the researcher explores the different reading methodologies and how they influence the facilitative role of the teacher in the development of reading skills (READ, 2006b:16; READ, 2006a:9).

4.5.1 Reading Aloud

Reading Aloud allows learners to listen actively as the Grade 1 teacher models the act of reading. The teachers engage learners by capitalising on their listening and comprehension skills in an activity which teaches a learner to act as a reader (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:95; READ, 2005b:28; Washtell, 2008b:70-71; Zeiler, 1993:112). This reading methodology involves the teacher, the learner and the author of the text. It is the text that teaches learners how to read. The purpose of reading aloud to learners is to foster positive attitudes to reading different texts and different genres' distinctive language. Learners are exposed to the written language, which is different from the spoken language. It offers them opportunities to make meaning as they respond to texts and link the reading with their experiences and other texts the teacher may have read to them. It provides opportunities for the socialisation of learners as they share ideas and experiences related to the story before, during and after reading. This highlights the importance of talk in becoming a

reader (DoE, 2008i:26; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:95; Washtell, 2008b:70-73; Zeiler, 1993:112,117).

Several authors (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:95; Literacy Professional Learning Resource (LPLR), 2009:1; READ, 2006a:10; Cullinan, 2000:3) maintain that children who are read to become better readers and perform better academically. Some of the benefits of *Reading Aloud* are that it bridges the gap between familiar oral discourse and the new written one, enables learners to enjoy stories that they cannot yet read by themselves, expands vocabulary and knowledge of language structure, broadens general and world knowledge, fosters a desire to read for themselves and improves listening skills as well as comprehension skills such as prediction (DoE, 2008:13; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:95; READ, 2006a:10; Wessels, 2007:126). Cullinan (1998:2), however, emphasises the importance of verbal interaction between the teacher and learners. Learners listen to the teacher's explanations and clarifications of the text during reading aloud sessions.

4.5.1.1 Teacher's role in a reading aloud lesson

In using this methodology the Grade 1 teacher needs to be fully knowledgeable about her/his role before, during and after reading in a reading aloud lesson and prepare accordingly. S/he has to ensure that learners are comfortable and can see her/him and the book clearly (READ, 2005b:31).

a) Before reading

When using *Reading Aloud* methodology, the Grade 1 teacher makes sure that this session is not too long. S/he activates prior knowledge by asking questions about the cover and the title of the book, setting and characters. S/he assists learners to predict what the book will be about and help them to make connections between what they already know and the new information they will hear in the story. All the difficult words are explained. S/he prepares a song or rhyme from a story to allow learners to join in when s/he comes to that slot.

b) During reading

S/he must show learners the pictures as s/he reads the story and ask learners what they notice in one or two of the pictures. S/he may ask a few questions to

ensure that learners are following the logic in the story. S/he reads with expression, animation and holds the attention of the learners. S/he may allow learners to join in if there is a refrain in the story (READ 2006a:12; Washtell, 2008b:60).

c) *After reading*

After reading the Grade 1 teacher can ask questions to determine the learners' understanding of the story. S/he may also ask questions to help learners respond emotionally to the story, to link it to the learners' own lives. S/he can use the context of the story to design relevant writing and drama activities (READ, 2005b:28-32).

4.5.2 Shared Reading

Shared Reading was developed by Don Holdaway (as cited in Kelly & Safford, 2008:45; READ Free State Department of Education (READ FS DoE), 2004b:19; Washtell, 2008b:57) as a way of recreating bedtime story reading in the classroom. It underlines that storybook reading, which should start at home, is a significant factor in children's reading development. *Shared Reading* focuses on the collaborative and social nature of learning and the teacher's role in scaffolding reading beyond the learners' current stage of development towards *Independent Reading* (TUSD Balanced Literacy, 2010:20; LPLR, 2009:2; Washtell, 2008b:57). It is a whole class activity in which the teacher and learners read together from a Big Book in a relaxed learning environment. The print of the Big Book must be large enough for all the learners to see the words clearly. The teacher reads the story aloud while pointing to the words to make learners aware of the relationship between the written and the spoken word. As the Grade 1 teacher reads aloud, s/he invites learners to join in when they feel confident to read the words and the teacher has aroused motivation to read. A shared reading lesson may be spread over three days, with day 1 focusing on introducing the text, day 2 on language spelling and punctuation convention, and day 3 with *Shared* and *Independent Writing* (DoE, 2008i:12,19-24; READ, 2006a: 11).

The main purpose of a shared reading activity is to ensure that learners enjoy reading, however, the teacher must also introduce learners to the world of literature,

meaning and response, help them to build and extend comprehension, to acquire interesting language and vocabulary as well as to decode by using the words in the text (Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) Balanced Literacy, 2010; Washtell, 2008b:59). The teacher must be aware of the benefits associated with using *Shared Reading* in a classroom to ensure that the activities s/he has planned for can be realised. S/he can focus on meaning construction and fun, encourage reading strategies, such as predicting, checking, confirming and self-correcting at the level of letter, word and sentence; developing awareness of the functions of print, familiarity with language patterns, and word-recognition skills; extending knowledge of phonics, sight words and vocabulary words; and helping in meeting individual needs of learners (DoE, 2008i:20-21; TUSD Balanced Literacy, 2010:1).

4.5.2.1 *Teacher's role in a shared reading lesson*

The teacher observes some steps to indicate her/his role before, during and after reading in a shared reading lesson (DoE, 2008i:22-23; READ FSDoE, 2004b:10-11).

a) *Before reading*

The Grade 1 teacher displays the Big Book while ensuring that all learners can see the text and gather learners around her/him. S/he ensures that reading is enjoyable. In order to ensure active participation of the learners, s/he may introduce the book by questioning the learners about the setting and explaining any difficult words or concepts. The 'picture walk' would help her/him to talk about the cover and title to orientate learners to the text. S/he can ask purposeful questions to get the learners to predict what the text will be about and can also explain the type of text, a few key words and the characters. As s/he links the text to the learners' knowledge and experiences through questions s/he enhances reading for meaning (READ FSDoE, 2004b:10-11).

b) *During reading*

The teacher's facilitative role entails reading the text as she points to each word to allow learners to see and hear it simultaneously. S/he models effective reading, uses expressions to make meaning, notices punctuation and illustrations and creates many opportunities for learners to join in.

c) After reading

In this phase s/he may ask learners questions to help them understand the main message, main characters and to recall events in sequence. S/he must encourage learners to share their personal responses to the text. The learners may retell the story in their own words or dramatise part of it. S/he guides learners to do *Independent Reading or Group Reading* after *Shared Reading*.

4.5.3 Group Reading

Contrary to *Shared Reading* and *Reading Aloud*, *Group Reading* is driven by a small group of learners, approximately six in a group. It is for reason that Washtell (2008b:67 & 69) refers to it as *Independent Group Reading* while Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008:98) have named it 'reading together'. Although the groups of learners read texts based on different themes, each group member has a copy of the same book. Group members read aloud, allowing each one to take a turn in reading a section. A group leader oversees the reading activities and gives support and direction. At the end of the group reading activity, each learner must complete a structured work card which involves discussions on the book, answering oral questions and some written work followed by a report-back session (READ FSDoE, 2004a:48 & 54; READ, 2006a:11; Wessels, 2007:140-141).

Group Reading is ideal for providing learners with opportunities to read on their own whilst enhancing social skills such as respect for others (Washtell, 2008b:67). Learners are motivated to express and listen to opinions, acquire skills to work co-operatively through the text, increase comprehension, promote reading for enjoyment and information and foster self-confidence by reading familiar and new text (Washtell, 2008b:69; Wessels, 2007:140) .

The Grade 1 teacher also enjoys some benefits such as revising words and sounds already taught, listening to learners read either individually or together, discussing the text and asking questions to check comprehension; modelling new reading strategies; and teaching new words (DoE, 2008i:12).

4.5.3.1 Teacher' role in a group reading lesson

Similarly to other methodologies, *Group Reading* also unfolds in steps to indicate the teacher's role before, during and after reading. It is important for the Grade 1 teacher to have trained group leaders in advance to help her/him set up *Group Reading*.

a) *Before reading*

The teacher organises the sets of group reading books and reading cards with the help of group leaders. S/he divides the class into groups of six. The group leaders can take the responsibility to distribute the books and work cards to their groups.

b) *During reading*

While the learners are busy reading, the teacher ascertains that the group leader supervises the reading. S/he has to ensure that any member who struggles to read is assisted by the other members of the group. As the teacher moves between the groups s/he must ensure that each member has a copy of the same book and that all members of the group read the same text. Occasionally, she may instruct the groups to read the book aloud, each group member taking a turn to read a section. S/he has to monitor that the whole class is involved in group reading at the same time, but each group is reading different material (READ, 2006a:12; Washtell, 2008b:60).

c) *After reading*

The Grade 1 teacher encourages and guides learners in discussing the book by using the group reading work cards to answer the questions about it, such as how they understood the story and how they felt about the story. Learners may also be asked to prepare group reading for the whole class (Washtell, 2008b:69-70).

4.5.4 Guided Reading

Guided Reading is sometimes referred to as *Group Guided Reading* (DoE, 2008i:26-27), and is very similar to group reading in that a teacher works with a small group of learners of the same reading level in order to develop specific reading skills. The major difference between *Group Reading* and *Guided Reading* is that with the former

a platform is created on which the teacher can involve learners in *Guided Reading*. It is therefore important for learners to master the activities of *Group Reading* so that they can feel secure and confident when engaged in *Guided Reading*. The application of *Guided Reading* works in the opposite direction to *Shared Reading*, where explicit teaching dominates (READ 2006a:12; Washtell, 2008b:60).

In *Guided Reading*, as the name suggests, learners are guided towards *Independent Reading* (DoE, 2008i:27; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:96; Washtell, 2008b:60). The teacher encourages learner-talk by engaging them in discussions to challenge their thinking. In order to develop comprehension, teachers must ask higher-order questions. The development of comprehension and construction of meaning clearly indicates the significance of asking higher-order questions at every stage of learning to read. The learners' oral language, general knowledge, prior knowledge and lived experiences make it easier for them to develop comprehension. The READ FSDoE (2005a:6-7) maintains that understanding and making meaning of the text depends on the learners' ability to use their language knowledge, general knowledge, knowledge of letters and sounds and knowledge of words.

Washtell (2008b:63-64) encourages the use of inference and deduction skills in developing comprehension. A key feature of *Guided Reading* is reflected in the way the group members interact with one another as they work through the text. In using this methodology, the teacher is able to hear how each learner is progressing with her/his reading, assess each learner's reading and measure progress, decide what skills to develop, develop learners' reading skills, address problems in reading and give learners individual attention (READ FSDoE, 2005a:50-51).

4.5.4.1 Teacher's role in a guided reading lesson

The Grade 1 teacher's role is to ensure that other groups of learners are engaged in *Group Reading* before proceeding with *Guided Reading* as this will minimise disturbance and control the level of noise from the other groups. The teacher chooses a book which learners will be able to read, while offering a few new challenges to develop their reading skills. The pre-reading activities (before reading) are usually teacher-driven. During reading, learners are given opportunities to read

independently (learner-driven). After reading activities are once more teacher-driven (TUSD Balanced Literacy, 2010; Washtell, 2008b:60-61).

a) *Before reading*

The Grade 1 teacher states the intended objectives and success criteria of the lesson, introduces the text to be read, then activates learners' prior knowledge as s/he discusses the title, the type of text, and illustrations. She must also ensure that learners have enough general knowledge to understand the setting of the story. It is also important that she identifies and explains new and difficult words, discusses the purpose of the story, asks learners for predictions and bears in mind which reading skills s/he wishes to develop (READ FSDoE, 2005a:52-53; TUSD Balanced Literacy, 2010; Washtell, 2008b:60).

b) *During reading*

During orientation/beginning sessions the Grade 1 teacher may read part or all of the text to model the reading and point out headings, illustrations and difficult words (READ FSDoE, 2005a:54). The teacher can also engage learners in *Independent Reading* by asking them to read aloud in turn or read silently at their own pace then go back and read aloud. The teacher may also organise a group conference to encourage learners to reread the text to enable them to extend understanding of the text, focus on the learners' responses to the text, follow a conversational pattern and interact concerning the text (TUSD Balanced Literacy, 2010). Some of the teacher-led activities include encouraging learners to talk about the story, writing down any words they find difficult and explaining their meaning, helping them to sound out unfamiliar words and using prompting where necessary (Washtell, 2008b:61).

c) *After reading (teacher driven)*

This phase requires the Grade 1 teacher to discuss the text with the whole group to check for understanding. S/he rereads sections of the book and engages learners in the discussion. The teacher may also ask questions about what has been read and establish that learners read for meaning, praise successful problem solving strategies, repeat specific skills that were less successful, encourage learners to share their personal responses to the book

and finally return to the teaching objectives and consolidate points (TUSD Balanced Literacy, 2010; Washtell, 2008b:61).

4.5.5 Independent Reading

It is every teacher's vision to see all learners reach the level of *Independent Reading*. It allows learners to be gradually weaned off the teacher's assistance and become increasingly responsible for their own reading (Benchmark Education, 2011:1; Marshall, 2011:1; Washtell, 2008b:67). This reading methodology is sometimes referred to as 'voluntary reading', 'leisure reading', 'spare time reading' and 'recreational reading' by various authors (as cited in Cullinan, 1998:1).

When learners can read independently, the teacher can take pride in the knowledge that learners have mastered the strategies and skills s/he taught during *Reading Aloud*, *Shared Reading*, *Group* and *Guided Reading* (DoE, 2008i:28). Mastery of reading strategies and skills is a strong indication and conviction that learners can apply those skills on their own. Learners read fluently and show confidence and excitement about their ability to read. *Independent Reading* does not happen automatically but develops over time. It is therefore important to engage learners very early in their schooling days. The Foundation Phase learners (Grade R and 1), who are still learning to decode and read for meaning, can also be engaged in *Independent Reading*. The teacher can dedicate some quiet time to allow learners to page through the picture books (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:97).

As *Independent Reading* is regarded as the highest level of reading, learners do not experience major difficulties with decoding and reading for meaning. Of importance here is that learners know what to do when they get stuck in the process of reading. In using *Independent Reading*, the teacher presents opportunities for the learners to practice the reading strategies and skills they have acquired in *Shared Reading*, *Group* and *Guided Reading* by continuously refining and honing them. Through *Independent Reading*, they have choices of what to read, when and how to read, depending on their reading abilities and interests (Cullinan, 1998:1; Washtell, 2008b:67).

Washtell (2008b:68) explains that whole class *Independent Reading* can take various forms such as Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR), Everyone Reading In Class (ERIC) and Sustained Quiet Uninterrupted Reading time (SQUIRT). Benchmark Education (2011:2) maintains that sustained silent reading (SSR) cannot be equated with *Independent Reading*. In contrast to *Independent Reading*, in which learners are encouraged to take a lead and show initiative, SSR is still teacher-driven, with them only observing how learners read without conducting conferences. These forms of *Independent Reading* explain the origins of the National Reading Strategy (NRS), an intervention mechanism implemented by the Department of Education to nurture positive reading behaviour in South African learners (DoE, 2008g). The implementation of the NRS was popularised as *Drop All and Read* (DAAR), with a daily half-hour session devoted to it, in which teachers and learners were to read for enjoyment. Benchmark Education (2011:2) refers to this reading activity as *Drop Everything and Read* (DEAR).

That learners can choose and control what, how and when they read gives them a sense of ownership of the reading process. As they become independent readers they expand their own knowledge base, with each developing her/his reading tastes and preferences. Consequently, they perform better academically and become lifelong learners who view reading as a priority inside and outside school (Benchmark Education, 2011:1; Marshall, 2011: 1&3; READ, 2006a:14). *Independent Reading* helps in contributing to vocabulary growth, which is essential in building background knowledge; contributing to knowledge of text content and familiarity with standard text structures; increasing reading comprehension, knowledge of the world and spelling facility; and understanding grammar (Cullinan, 1998:5).

4.5.5.1 Teacher's role in independent reading

Thorough preparation and organisation is the cornerstone of the successful application of the reading methodologies. In order to ensure that *Independent Reading* takes place in such a way that learners will benefit from this activity, teachers need to ensure that a variety of book genres from which learners can make a choice, matching their needs, interests, and strengths is available. The teacher must have screened all the books to ensure that the contents and language meet her/his approval in consideration of her/his learners' level of development, their

diverse interests and needs. The teacher has to encourage learners to engage in book talk, mini-lessons, conferencing, group sharing and evaluation after each reading sessions (Benchmark Education, 2011:2-3; Marshall, 2011:2). Washtell (2008b:69-70) encourages Foundation Phase teachers to engage learners in *Independent Group Reading* to scaffold *Independent Reading* amongst their peers. The teacher follows the same procedure as in *Group Reading*, with an exception that the learners drive the process.

Throughout the discussion on reading methodologies, it is evident that Grade 1 teachers need a firm theoretical grounding in the different reading methodologies in order to apply them effectively to the development of learners' reading skills. Since learners come from different cultural backgrounds, possess diverse cultural literacy, have diverse interests and needs, capabilities and learning styles, the different reading methodologies cater for the reading development of all learners. The understanding that comes through from the discussions of the reading methodologies is that each has a specific purpose and is important in developing reading skills. A Grade 1 teacher cannot choose to use one only, but in using a combination is likely to enhance the facilitative role in developing learners' reading skills.

The effective use of all the reading methodologies may thus be regarded as stepping stones towards achieving the goal of learning to read, The Grade 1 teacher systematically assists each learner to develop from being an inexperienced reader to an experienced one (Kelly & Safford, 2008:50-53), and to show progression from being at the level of emergent reader to being an independent one (DoE, 2008i:9-11). The success behind employing the different reading methodologies lies in creating a rich literacy environment that exposes a Grade 1 learner to written language and its use. The provision of books in the classroom will enable the teacher to lead the learners in understanding that the books they read in class provide information and that the each page contains different information. In addition, the teacher must be a source of motivation in driving learners to want to read books and enjoy reading them (Michalowitz, 1993:19).

4.6 READING STRATEGIES AND SKILLS

Discussions on *BTL* and *READ* programmes emphasise the teacher as an indispensable component in the development of reading skills. S/he creates an environment that is conducive to developing the reading skills and ensures that the learners are motivated to learn to read. It is therefore important that Grade 1 teachers understand their facilitative role in developing reading skills. While it is important for them to be knowledgeable about the methodologies and approaches they must use in developing learners' reading skills, it is also important to be conversant with the strategies and skills needed to present the content. When teachers have a thorough knowledge of teaching strategies and skills which can be used in developing reading, their facilitative role will be enhanced. They will also be functioning from an informed position. Their teaching activities will be more meaningful and learners will be able to acquire the strategies and skills necessary to help them be lifelong readers. Learners need reading strategies in order to deal with difficult words needed for constructing meaning from the text (READ, 2005a:9). It is therefore crucial that they have a clear understanding of what a 'reading strategy' is in contrast to a 'reading skill'.

4.6.1 Difference between reading skills and reading strategies

The term 'reading skill' was briefly discussed in Chapter 2 (2.2.4). The acquisition of both lower-order and higher-order reading skills is crucial in identifying and recognising letter, letter clusters and words in a text and to make interpretations from the text. The terms 'reading skills' and 'reading strategies' underpin cognitive processes but they cannot be used interchangeably. Reading skills are described as cognitive behaviours or practices which learners have perfected over time through repetition. Such learnt behaviour or practices become automatic and as a result make it easier for learners to develop fluency and efficiency in reading (Block & Duffy, 2008:20; Noon, 2008:1; Wolsey, 2010:1). Meanwhile, for Coiro (2000:2) and Wolsey (2010:1), a reading strategy is a deliberate, goal-directed and interactive process through which a reader constructs meaning from a text. According to Peterson (2008) and Block and Duffy (2008:20) reading strategies are well planned, specific procedures or routines the teachers apply consciously in reading lessons to

enhance reading comprehension. It is required of the teacher to explain what the strategy is all about, why and when learners must use it.

Coiro (2002:2) states that teachers develop reading skills when they focus on each component of developing reading, e.g., phonemic awareness, as a discrete entity. This practice confuses learners when they read authentic texts because they do not consist of letters, syllables and words without context. Teachers use reading strategies to help learners to construct meaning from a text, for instance, predicting, to help learners think ahead and make assumptions about what they are reading, which they have to validate as they continue. Coiro (2000:2) maintains that helping learners to acquire reading skills is effective when it is embedded within reading strategies. In so doing, learners acquire reading skills within the context of reading strategies. When learners eventually learn to use those reading skills independently and apply them to construct meaning from other texts, then those skills can be regarded as strategies.

Wolsey (2010), on the other hand, insists that when the reader successfully uses a specific reading strategy it becomes a skill, because it is then automatic. For instance, a Grade 1 teacher helps her/his learners to read by pointing at letters from left to right. This teacher is using the *one-to-one matching* strategy. When learners have mastered this strategy and can read with increasing fluency and understanding, without consciously applying the reading strategy, then the strategy can be regarded as a reading skill. The first view, by Coiro, is difficult to understand and will therefore not be useful in assisting the Grade 1 teachers to facilitate the development of the learners' reading skills. The second one, by Wolsey, is more easy to understand and will therefore be used in this study.

4.6.2 Decoding skills and strategies

The concept 'reading', as described in Chapter 2 (2.2), as an interwoven process of decoding and meaning making, is dependent on the acquisition of decoding and comprehension skills and strategies that are central to developing reading (James, 2006). The ability to decode is a great step towards developing fluency and understanding of the text. Vacca *et al.* (2003:118-119), however, maintain that the

acquisition of decoding and comprehension skills and strategies should not be taught as isolated entities, but within words and sentences. Wessels (2007:91-119) has divided decoding skills into bottom up and top down skills, which Feitelson (1973:23-27) refers to as identification and interpretation skills respectively (Chapter 2:2.2.4). Wessels (2007:91-119) and Vacca *et al.* (2003:118-119) suggest practical examples of activities which teachers can use in a reading lesson to facilitate the acquisition of these skills.

4.6.2.1 Decoding skills (bottom up skills)

The following activities serve as examples, and teachers may think of other creative activities that they can use to enhance decoding.

- a) Letter-recognition** involves recognising letters in words, recognising letter clusters, matching words to form groups, and matching words and pictures (Wessels, 2007:91-94). Examples are discussing letters in the context of a language-experience story, using alphabet books, targeting a letter for discussion, linking letter recognition to writing, and creating letters through art activities and consonant substitution (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:119, 182 & 184).
- b) Word recognition** may involve matching words to form groups, substituting letters to form a string of words, building words, matching words and their meanings, matching words with sentences and matching words and pictures (Wessels, 2007:94-96), substituting consonants to read words or words belonging to the same word family (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:182-199).
- c) Synonyms and antonyms** may be found by learners matching words in a text (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:294-296; Washtell, 2008a:6; Wessels, 2007:97-98).
- d) Phrase recognition and cloze passages**, may be achieved by finding phrases in a text and filling in missing words in a passage (Wessels, 2007:99-100). Vacca *et al.* (2003:197-198) give examples of modified cloze passages, cloze passages with choices given, and guessing games.

4.6.2.2 Decoding strategies (bottom up strategies)

Vacca *et al.* (2003:183-189) further suggest the following reading strategies which Grade 1 teachers can use to improve word recognition:

- a) **Consonant-based strategy** can be applied by using physical actions to learn consonants, incorporating learners' association with favourite foods. It can also be applied with digraphs and blends.
- b) **Analogy-based strategy** can be applied to identify difficult words, using pronounceable word parts to divide them into the onset and rhyme.
- c) **Spelling-based strategy** can be applied by using word banks to learn new words and using word walls to help learners identify words that rhyme but are spelt with different letter patterns. Washtell (2008b:66) mentions using words to show subtle differences of meaning. Grade 1 teachers can teach their learners to use the following strategies in order to make sense of the text they are reading:
- ask yourself if you know anything about the topic (using general knowledge);
 - ask yourself if this word, phrase or sentence makes sense (using general knowledge, phonic knowledge and language knowledge);
 - sound out the beginning of the problematic word or look at the structure of the word for clues (using phonic knowledge);
 - look carefully at the illustrations or pictures for clues (using general knowledge);
 - use the words you know to read to the end, then go back and reread the text (using language and general knowledge);
 - guess what it could be and read on (using language and general knowledge); and
 - use the headings and subheadings to focus your reading (READ, 2005a:9-10)

4.6.3 Comprehension strategies

Some of the comprehension skills and strategies were discussed in detail in chapter 3 (3.2.5.9). It is evident that teachers must engage learners in certain activities to ensure that they acquire the comprehension skills and strategies critical to mastering reading. Regardful of the logic behind Wolsey's (2010) reasoning on the development of reading skills and reading strategies, it can be argued that at Grade 1 level the reading strategies to which learners are exposed will later develop as

reading skills if they become spontaneous and automatic when learners are reading. This will be a result of consistent and conscious application of those reading strategies in other contexts. Wessels (2007:103-120) recommends the following activities as crucial to developing top down / interpretation skills.

4.6.3.1 Comprehension skills (top down)

- a) *Retelling text contents*: reading, mingling and repeating, repeating texts in groups of three, learners repeating half a text to a partner who has the other half (Wessels, 2007:103-104).
- b) *Prediction*: predicting by examining pictures and title (Washtell, 2008b:65; Wessels, 2007:104).
- c) *Completing paragraphs*: adding appropriate sentences to complete the paragraph (Vacca *et al.*, 2003:197-198; Wessels, 2007:105).
- d) *Finding information*: obtaining information from other learners and writing it on the board regarding a specific text (Wessels, 2007:105-106).
- e) *Survey-Question-Read-Recite-Review (SQ3R)*: surveying the text, posing questions, reading and reciting the text and finally reviewing the text (Wessels, 2007:107-108).
- f) *Solving riddles*: matching riddles and answers (Wessels, 2007:109).
- g) *Building sentences, paragraphs and stories*: matching riddles and answers (Wessels, 2007:109).
- h) *Arranging information according to a sequence of events*: arranging scrambled information in the correct order (Washtell, 2008b:66; Wessels, 2007:115).
- i) *Arranging objects according to qualities*: arranging objects in a specified order (Wessels, 2007:115).
- j) *Comparing and contrasting*: considering similarities, differences, advantages and disadvantages (Wessels, 2007:116).

4.6.3.2 Comprehension strategies

Various authors (Barr, 2010; Block & Duffy, 2008:22; Coiro, 2000; Fisher, Frey & Williams, 2002; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:116; LPLR, 2009; Professional Development Education Place (PDEP), 1997; Schoenherr, 1999; Tucson Unified School District (TUSD), 2010; Washtell, 2008b, 65-67) agree about the significance of reading strategies and although they discuss different reading strategies there is

some overlapping. Despite the overlapping, Block and Duffy (2008:20&25) insist that reading strategies must be directly taught to learners within a context so as to enable them to apply them to reading a text in order to make sense. Of utmost importance is for teachers to explain to the learners why they must read with comprehension and why they need the reading strategies (Block & Duffy, 2008:20).

Some of the most common strategies which can be used by Grade 1 teachers are the following:

- a) *Activating prior knowledge*: making connections between what learners already know and what they will be experiencing in the text (Schoenherr, 1999:1; Washtell, 2008b:65).
- b) *Building prior knowledge*: strengthening learners' prior knowledge and discussing unfamiliar words prior to a shared guided reading (Schoenherr, 1999:1; Washtell, 2008b:66).
- c) *Picture flick/picture walk*: obtaining a preview of the text by discussing pictures from the cover page up to the end of text (Literacy Professional Learning Resource, 2009; READ FSDoE, 2004b:11).
- d) *K-W-L*: responding to the following questions 'What do you **K**now about the topic?', 'What do you still **W**ant to know about the topic?' and 'What did you **L**earn about the topic?' (Block & Duffy, 2008:21; DoE T, 2007:12-19; Fisher, Frey & Williams, 2002:71).
- e) *Predicting*: sizing up a text in advance by looking at titles, text features, sections, pictures and captions and continuously updating and repredicting what will occur next in text (Block & Duffy, 2008:22; Coiro, 2000:1; Washtell, 2008b:65; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:116; Schoenherr, 1999:1). Block and Duffy (2008:29) maintain that a strategic reader goes through an interwoven process of predicting, monitoring and re-predicting every time s/he reads a text.
- f) *Monitoring*: stopping while reading to self-correct and problem on the spot, decoding and deriving meaning from words, phrases, sentences and text from the cue systems (Block & Duffy, 2008:22; Schoenherr, 1999:1; Professional Development Education Place (PDEP), 1997:1; Tucson Unified School District (TUSD), 2010:). Other strategies related to monitoring include asking oneself if reading is making sense, rereading, reading ahead, looking up words in the dictionary and asking for help.

- g) *Retelling the story*: teacher tells the story and the learner retells to a partner or small group (Barr, 1999a; LPLR, 2009:1).
- h) *Confirming*: establishing whether the prediction about the further development of the text is realised (Coiro, 2000:1-2; Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:116).
- i) *Inferencing*: making judgements, conclusions, or reasoning from given information (PDEP, 1997:1). Connecting ideas in texts based on personal experiences, knowledge of other texts, and general world knowledge (Block & Duffy, 2008:22).
- j) *Summarising*: pulling together the important information in texts in order to identify key ideas and locate key words and phrases to draw conclusions (Block & Duffy, 2008:22; Washtell, 2008b:65). This strategy can be coupled with reflecting whereby a reader revisits the text and reflects on understanding of it (Coiro, 2000:1-2).
- k) *Evaluating*: noting the setting, characters and story grammar early on, with problems, solutions and resolutions to occur thereafter (Block & Duffy, 2008:22).
- l) *Synthesising*: watching for textual features, accessing features, unique types of information, sequence of details and conclusions and combining all of these to make meaning (Block & Duffy, 2008:22)

In considering that Grade 1 teachers need to teach their learners these skills, it may not be possible to teach all of them in one year. This is largely dependent on the quality of Grade 1 learners who are registered at the time, their experiences, interests, prior knowledge, background knowledge, motivational level and linguistic competence.

4.7 LESSON PLANNING AS AN ASPECT OF FACILITATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS

The discussions on how to apply the different reading programmes, methodologies, approaches and the various reading strategies in the classrooms hinge on thorough lesson planning and preparation. This includes teacher and learner activities as well as the media to be used in the classroom during lesson presentation. These elements must be well-integrated and aligned in a lesson to ensure smooth

development of the lesson phases and achievement of the stated aims and objectives.

Thorough lesson planning and preparation of each lesson is critical for effective facilitation of the development of reading skills. These writers (Killen, 2010:84-102; Nieuwoudt & Nieuwoudt, 2011:323-324; Milkova, 2011) are unanimous that lesson planning is a vehicle through which teachers can decide on which elements to include in the lesson, such as aims and objectives, rationale, instructional and assessment procedures and the materials and resources. Thorough lesson planning and preparation ensures that the Grade 1 teachers are able to select the content, decide on the theme and prepare such materials as reading books, posters, pictures, flashcards, sentence strips and writing material necessary for their lessons. In their lesson planning and preparation, they must consider learners' diverse needs, experiences and background knowledge and how each learner will be accommodated in the lesson. The teacher must continually assess how learners participate in the teaching and learning activities.

The launch of the FfLC specified what content was to be taught and how. In addition, the DoE (2008b) emphasises the need for thorough lesson planning in Grade 1 classes by compiling four policy documents, Foundations for Learning: Foundation Phase Literacy Lesson plans for the First Term (DoE, 2008b), Second Term (DoE, 2008c), Third Term (DoE, 2008d) and Fourth Term (DoE, 2008e). These policy documents were made available for the teachers so that they could make use of the lesson exemplars provided in them to facilitate the development of reading skills. In the CAPS document (DoBE: 2011a; DoBE, 2011b), it is suggested that the Languages Programme, should comprise the following main skills, namely, listening and speaking, reading and phonics, writing and handwriting, thinking and reasoning and language structure and use. In addition, the FfLC and CAPS suggest integration of all the components of facilitating the development of reading, namely phonemic awareness, word recognition including sight words and phonics, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency in a lesson. A time allocation for a literacy lesson of approximately one hour and twenty minutes per day is recommended, in which the Grade 1 teachers must facilitate the development of these skills in an integrated way. The literacy lessons must be based on *Shared Reading or Writing, Group Guided*

Reading, Paired or Independent Reading and phonics (including phonemic awareness). Although the DoE suggests how much time should be spent on each component, the teacher can still decide how long to present the lesson. A teacher must decide on a theme from the Big Book on which the lesson will be based.

4.8 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 has provided an exposition of the concept 'reading programme', in contextualising some of the problems experienced in the implementation of the NCS with regard to the development of reading skills in Grade 1 at the Foundation Phase. One of the problems, which has had a negative impact in developing learners' reading skills, is the absence of a reading programme in the NCS, however this does not nullify the teachers' experience of their exposure to other reading programmes, such as the Molteno Project *Breakthrough to Literacy* and READ programmes.

In this chapter, the researcher has discussed the *BTL* and READ programmes and how the Grade 1 teachers should employ them in facilitating the development of learners' reading skills. An explanation was given for why these two reading programmes did not reach all the Grade 1 teachers and learners. The different reading programmes are used simultaneously with reading strategies and skills, which are actualised in a lesson plan. A discussion on how teachers can use these strategies and skills was included.

This chapter, together with Chapters 2 and 3, precedes a chapter on research design and methodology, which indicates how the study was carried out.

CHAPTER 5

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

My intention in this chapter is to describe and justify my approach and methodology in answering the research question: “How can I assist the Grade 1 teachers in some Mangaung schools to improve their facilitative role in the development of reading skills in Sesotho?” The descriptions and justification cover the particular methodology and specific qualitative methods used in the study (Dick, 1993:29). In my endeavour to answer the research question, I broke it down into the following three questions:

- How do Grade 1 teachers in some Mangaung schools facilitate the development of reading skills under their prevailing circumstances?
- What can the Grade 1 teachers and I do to improve their facilitative role in the development of reading skills?
- How can the Grade 1 teachers and I assess the teachers’ progress as they improve their facilitative role in the development of reading skills?

I formulated these research questions so as to maintain the alignment of my investigation with the *intend-act-review* cycle of Dick (1993:5), the *action-reflection* cycle of McNiff and Whitehead (2011:9) and the *look-think-act* research cycle of Stringer (2004:45). I considered a qualitative research design, with an action research component, appropriate for my study. The purpose of this qualitative investigation is closely linked to the purpose of the study, which is to determine how I can assist the Grade 1 teachers in some Mangaung schools to improve their facilitation of the development of reading skills in Sesotho Home Language (HL) in line with the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). Since the investigation was conducted together with Grade 1 teachers, as co-researchers, there is a need to elaborate on how they were selected. True to the nature of this qualitative study I also give an exposition of how *validity*, *reliability* and *reflexivity* were achieved in the investigation.

Methods of data collection are discussed in this chapter, namely interviews, observations, review of documents and video recordings, and details of adherence to

ethical guidelines. I also include an exposition of how the research processes unfolded and conclude this chapter by discussing the limitations of the study.

5.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is characterised by a style of writing which is neither too formal nor too technical, hence it is preferred that the qualitative researcher writes in the first person pronoun 'I' and in active voice (Hamill, 1999; Lichtman, 2006:14; The Writing Centre, 2012). McNiff and Whitehead (2011:118) and McNiff (2008) support the use of the first person pronoun, claiming that it shows the originality of the researcher's claim to knowledge which s/he can celebrate with pride. Lichtman (2006:85) strongly suggests using the narrative form, in the first person style, to give a story more impact, and because it is "...engaging, it brings the reader into the story, it acknowledges your role in doing research and it becomes more personal". Mauer (1996:384) echoes these sentiments by suggesting that qualitative researchers must avoid using passive constructions which are difficult to understand and tend to bore the reader.

On the basis of the above, I use the pronoun 'I' in this chapter, or the first person plural pronoun 'we' when I report working together with the Grade 1 teachers as co-researchers. As a qualitative researcher, I adhered to the principles of research design, namely formulating the research question, deciding on the methodology, making decisions about how to collect data and which instruments were appropriate, deciding on the selection of participants, addressing issues of *reliability*, *validity* and *reflexivity*, considering how to deal with ethical issues, deciding on data analysis techniques and reporting and interpreting results (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:49; Gray, 2009:4-5; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:26).

My study commenced with a literature review on the concept 'reading', 'reading approaches' and 'reading programmes' as well as an in-depth situation analysis pertinent to how the Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills in Sesotho. Drawing on the information gained above, the Grade 1 teachers, who were already participating in the study as co-researchers, and I planned for the intervention. In the in-depth situation analysis I observed how Grade 1 teachers

develop their learners' reading skills. We could, therefore, interpret how Grade 1 teachers facilitated the development of reading skills in their classrooms, as well as how they interacted and communicated with one another. Since qualitative research is contextual I had opportune moments when I could observe the interplay of the Grade 1 teachers' motivation, emotions and interpersonal cooperation and conflicts in developing reading skills (Gray, 2009:166; Lichtman, 2006:8; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:321). Qualitative research, as a dynamic and ever-changing process, opened possibilities for me to follow multiple ways of studying the behaviour of the Grade 1 teachers as they engaged their learners in a variety of reading activities. Since a qualitative researcher studies a phenomenon in its entirety rather than singling out specific variables, it was a great challenge for me, yet meaningful, to look at many aspects of how Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills (Lichtman, 2006:9-11; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:321). In order to obtain a holistic and deeper insight into this phenomenon I studied only a few individuals.

I determined the current practices by conducting the in-depth situation analysis focussing on the following aspects:

- selecting the participants from schools (Chapter 5: 5.4);
- describing concepts such as *validity*, *reliability* and *reflexivity* (Chapter 5: 5.5);
- describing the research instruments for collecting data (Chapter 5: 5.6);
- determining the procedures for analysing data (Chapter 5: 5.7); and
- explaining how I would deal with ethical issues in my relationship with the participants (Chapter 5: 5.8).

For the second part, as a researcher, I conducted my investigation at some of the selected schools mentioned above. I gave thick and vivid descriptions of what transpired in the interviews and observations, and what I had recorded in my field notes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:220; Lichtman, 2006:14; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:322). Throughout the development of my qualitative study I compiled narratives of observations at the schools, captured responses of the Grade 1 teachers in the interviews and kept records of reading lessons, as well as recording feedback of lessons. Later I captured the learners' activities through video

recordings. Some of the activities were also kept in the teachers' journals for purposes of triangulation.

I collected data through interviews, participant observation, documents analysis, video recordings and audio recording. This role demanded many hours of interaction with Grade 1 teachers in their classrooms, sometimes on a one-to-one basis or in groups. In the process the learners gradually became enthusiastic about my visits and participation in their daily teaching and learning environment. It was also necessary to study the documents which Grade 1 teachers were using in developing reading, such as policy documents from the Department of Education (DoE), the few reading books from different publishers and the teachers' guides. As an instrument of data collection, I was also responsible for the inductive analysis and interpretation of the data and so I was able to make meaning of the data, allowing for the emergence of codes, categories, themes and patterns (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:220; Lichtman, 2006:12; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:322).

I further employed participatory, collaborative and emancipatory action research as an integral part of the design. However, my action research investigation differs from the other action research models which are purely or wholly collaborative by virtue of the multiple roles I assumed in my study, sometimes as sole player (meta-researcher) and other times as a team player (co-researcher). In my qualitative research investigation, the involvement of the selected Grade 1 teachers was not purely collaborative as suggested by Makoelle (2012:83) and (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:14-15). I initiated the study by conceptualising the problem and did a literature review on the concept 'reading', 'reading approaches' and 'reading programmes'. I then gradually involved the selected Grade 1 teachers as participants in the in-depth situation analysis to identify the problems they experienced in facilitating the development of reading skills and later on as co-researchers in the two cycles of the intervention.

5.2.1 Action research

In order to involve the Grade 1 teachers as participants I approached the investigation through action research, combining Type 2 of action research, which Masters (1995:4-5) calls "*mutual - collaborative/practical - deliberative -*

intrepertivist”, with Type 3, which she refers to as “*enhancement approach/critical - emancipatory action research/critical science perspective*” (Masters, 1995:6; Zuber-Skerritt, 1996:5), the latter having its roots in critical theory (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:47). In employing this type of action research I involved the Grade 1 teachers as co-researchers (Makoelle, 2012:83), through which partnership we hoped to understand better how we could improve or change (where possible) the facilitation of the development of reading skills as experienced by the participants (O’Brien, 2001). In line with Masters’ (1995:4-6) description of the concept ‘action research’, Reason and Bradbury (2008:6) differentiate between *first-person*, *second-person* and *third-person* research. In the *first-person* research, the researcher investigates her/his own life and assesses the effects of her/his actions. In the *second-person* research, the practitioner investigates an issue of mutual concern with the other practitioners. The *second-person* research is more reflective of how I conducted my study since it created a situation which allowed me, as a practitioner (lecturer) and a qualitative researcher, to work together with other practitioners (Grade 1 teachers) with whom I share the same problem.

As a qualitative, action researcher, I combined action and research in order to ensure that the findings would add to the existing body of scientific knowledge, while simultaneously changing and/or improving practice (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:345; Dick, 1993:4; Gray, 2009:313; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:445; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:10&14). Waters-Adams (2006:4) insists that in action research the elements of action and research enjoy equal prominence, which brings into play the notion of “research on action by using action as a tool for research”. In this study, I conducted research on how the development of reading takes place, what problems were experienced by the Grade 1 teachers and how they could be resolved.

In line with various authors’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:345; Gray, 2009:312; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:444; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:8; O’Brien, 2001:3) description of action research, I planned my investigation to be very systematic and intentional in determining how Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills. I then decided to commit to a cyclical process of gathering and analysing data, communicating the outcomes and using them to improve the facilitation of reading

skills in Sesotho (Basse, as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:352; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:446; O'Brien, 2001:5; Stringer, 2004:10).

My engagement with the Grade 1 teachers is a demonstration of our attempts to show improvement in the practice; understanding of practice; and the situation in which the practice takes place (Carr & Kemmis, as cited in Waters-Adams, 2006:3). In aligning my investigation to Masters' thinking (1995:50), that the participants in action research need to gain new insights into their practice, the Grade 1 teachers and I started working on how to enhance our knowledge of their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. We also worked on building the Grade 1 teachers' enthusiasm and confidence so that they could begin to apply what they had learnt from the study into their practice, and so to bring about change.

Dick (1993:10) and Makoelle (2012:84) maintain that action research is a research paradigm which boasts several methodologies and methods of data collection and interpretation. These varied methodologies give details of how communities can change their situation or how professional practitioners can improve their practice (Gray, 2009:313; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:14). Logically, my study reflects the latter since I worked together with the Grade 1 teachers in improving the facilitation of the development of reading skills. In spite of these variations and different priorities, each methodology is characterised by the following three features:

- the research subjects are themselves researchers or involved in a democratic partnership with a researcher;
- research is seen as an agent of change; and
- data is¹ generated from the direct experiences of research participants (Gray, 2009:313).

5.2.1.1 Characteristics of action research

My qualitative study reflects several key characteristics of action research. Firstly, the Grade 1 teachers and I were involved in practical *problem-solving* in our endeavours to understand how to facilitate the development of reading skills. We worked *collaboratively* as co-researchers in improving the facilitative role of the teachers in

¹ Although 'data' is the Latin plural of datum it is generally treated as an uncountable 'mass' noun and so takes a singular verb (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 2011, Eds. Stevenson & Waite).

the development of reading skills. The Grade 1 teachers' decision to take action in order to improve the facilitation of the development of reading skills qualifies them as action researchers. This status comes with demands to generate new knowledge and to explain and describe how and why that new knowledge is instrumental in improving the development of reading skills (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:14). Secondly, our actions were informed by constant *feedback* from the data as we continuously evaluated and reflected on our actions. Through emancipatory action research, the Grade 1 teachers were able to understand some issues which deprived them of their autonomy as professionals and how some of the issues were no longer threats or perceived as slavery. They began to understand those issues that frustrated them and created obstacles in their way as professionals and how they could deal with them so that they could feel free to find new and better ways to facilitate the development of the learners reading skills (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:346-347; Gray, 2009:314; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:445; Stringer, 2004:31; Strydom, 2005:414). How we achieved these successes will be the focus of Chapter 6.

5.2.1.2 Cycles of action research

On the basis of the results of the in-depth situation analysis, the Grade 1 teachers and I formed a partnership through which we identified the problems that hinder the effective facilitation of the development of reading skills. We also decided on how we could resolve some of the problems the teachers and I had identified. As action researchers, we followed the four phases of action research to address the main research question, with each cycle comprising the phases of a cyclical action research process, consisting of planning, acting, monitoring and reflection (Altrichter, Kemmis, McTaggart & Zuber-Skerritt, 2002:130; Burns, 2010:19-20; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:347; Dick, 2000:2; Gray, 2009:318; Makoelle, 2012:84; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:9; O'Brien, 2001:4; Waters-Adams, 2006:5; Zuber-Skerritt, 1996:3). Figure 5.1 (below) captures the cycles of action research, each becoming complete when the teachers and I had gone through all the phases of the cyclical process of action research.

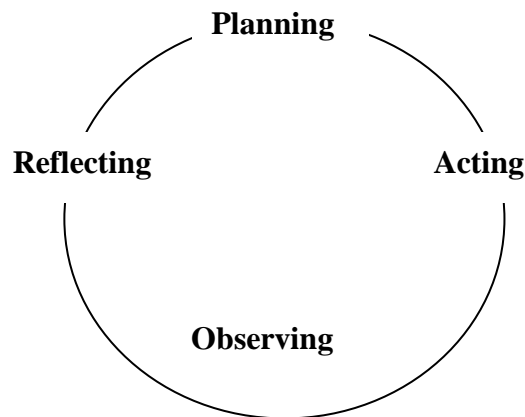


Figure 5.1: The phases of a cyclical action research process

The four phases of the cycle are as follows:

a) Strategic planning

The first phase of the cyclical process of action research is based on *strategic planning*, in this study a process of determining why it was important to assist the Grade 1 teachers in improving the facilitation of the development of reading skills, its feasibility and how I would execute my plan (Gray, 2009:319; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:446; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:89; Waters-Adams, 2006:17). My plan also included the resources I needed as I put it into action, how I would deal with ethical issues and, lastly, how I was to draw up my action plans (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:89-104). Waters-Adams (2006:17) refers to these actions as *reconnaissance* and further suggests the involvement of a *critical friend*, who in this case was both my supervisor and co-supervisor.

b) Acting

The second phase of the cyclical process was that of *acting*, in which I put my plan in motion. This process highlights the type of data I required to implement the action (Gray, 2009:320; Makoelle, 2012:84; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:120; Waters-Adams, 2006:18; Zuber-Skerritt, 1996:3). In carrying out my plan, I had to ensure that the action led towards achieving the purpose of the study and at this point it was also necessary to review the literature around my topic and be

familiar with what other people had written about it (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:111-118).

c) Observing

The third phase of the cyclical process of action research involves *observing/monitoring*. The implementation of the action may take the form of experimentation therefore, making it crucial to take notice of the impact of the action and to track the development of how it occurred (Gray, 2009:322; Makoelle, 2012:84; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:133; Waters-Adams, 2006:20.). As the facilitator in the study, I kept track of what transpired in our meetings as we discussed our contributions and made inputs in negotiating the way forward (Gray, 2009:322).

d) Reflecting

The process of reflecting was highly significant in that it necessitated the co-researchers to play back the observed action, interpret and actively engage with the data as a means of attaching meaning to it (Makoelle, 2012:84-85). The focus of our reflection was to provide evidence that proved that indeed there were improvements and changes and that some learning amongst the participants had taken place (Gray, 2009:322). The process of turning data into evidence guaranteed the validity of our claim that we had improved the facilitation of the development of reading skills (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:150).

5.2.1.3 Phases of action research

While the basic action research cycle occurs in four phases (Altrichter *et al.*, 2002:130; Burns, 2010:19-20; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:347; Dick, 2000:2; Gray, 2009:318; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:9; O'Brien, 2001:4; Waters-Adams, 2006:5; Zuber-Skerrit, 1996:3), other authors assert that the *reflection* phase may be followed by modifications of the action. The process of modifying the action, based on the reflection made throughout the cycle, requires new planning in light of how successful or unsuccessful the action has been (Altrichter *et al.*, 2002:130; Dick, 2000:2; Gray, 2009:318; Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998:23; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:9; McNiff, 2002:3; O'Brien, 2001:4; Waters-Adams, 2006:5). Figure 5.2 (below) introduces the fifth phase of the cyclical process of action research, namely **re-planning**, which brings an element of the spiral cycles of action that indicates their

opening up for new dimensions and directions (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007:278; Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998:22; Waters-Adams, 2006:19).

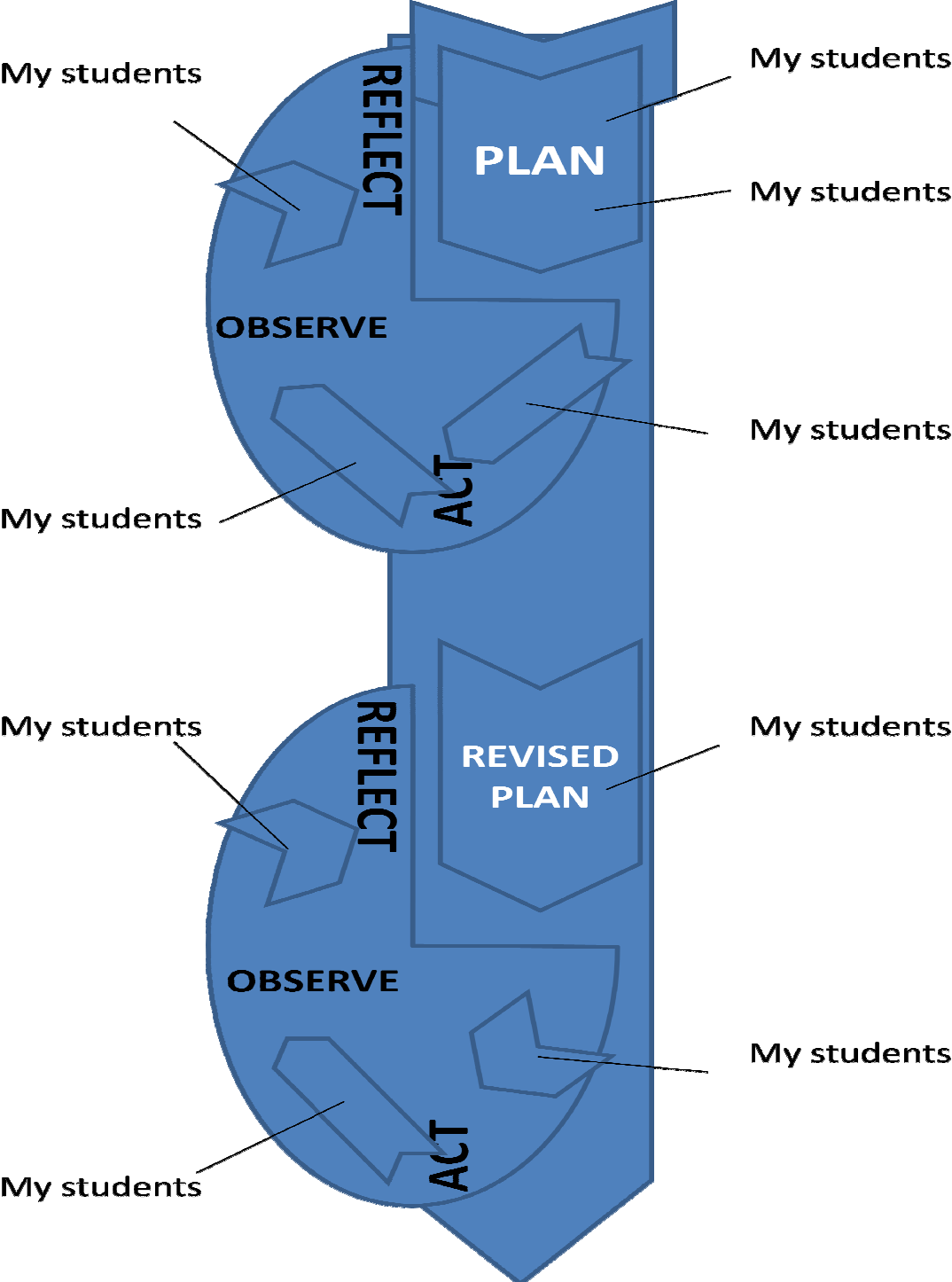


Figure 5.2: A fifth phase of the cyclical process of action research: re-planning (in Waters-Adams, 2006:19).

5.2.2 Participatory action research

Participatory action research, as a *social process* (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007:280; Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998:23), triggers genuine interest in improving the teachers' role in facilitating the development of reading skills. The teachers' action was characterised by planning the action, implementing it, observing, reflecting and re-planning to trigger the next cycles. Each cycle informed how the next one would occur. In the process new understandings of Grade 1 teachers' problems in facilitating the development of reading skills emerged (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:298-299; Gray, 2009:314; McTaggart, 1989:1; Stringer, 2004:33). As a *reflexive process*, participatory action research was instrumental in assisting the Grade 1 teachers, as participants in the study, to begin to look objectively at their own experiences of facilitating the development of reading (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007:282; Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998:24). They also developed an understanding of professional and interpersonal constraints that prevented them from exercising their autonomy and freedom in daily situations (Grundy, as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:302).

In constantly communicating with the Grade 1 teachers, I ensured that they maintained genuine participation in the study and remained loyal to the democratic partnership established at the beginning of the investigation. It was in this partnership that they began to understand their role as action researchers and as my co-researchers. This understanding came as a result of the realisation that once they took collaborative action, with the purpose of improving the facilitation of the development of reading skills and explained how and why they facilitated the development of reading skills better, they would be engaging in action research (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:14). In this way, participatory action research was a systematic learning process through which the selected Grade 1 teachers prepared themselves for the challenges and to respond to opportunities that presented themselves when they embarked on improving their facilitative role in the development of their learners' reading skills (McNiff, 2002:1; McTaggart, 1989:2).

Although participatory action research is *collaborative* (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:348; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007:282; Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998:23; Makoelle, 2012:83; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:445; McNiff & Whitehead,

2011:32; McTaggart, 1989:1-2; O'Brien, 2001:6; Waters-Adams, 2006:7), it does not imply that all the participants do the same thing. As a researcher in the study I played different roles, including planner, facilitator, designer, leader, listener, teacher and observer, in accordance to the demands of the situation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:349; Gray, 2009:323; O'Brien, 2001:11). Participatory action research involves continuous evaluation of what the researchers are doing, in this case demonstrating the validity of our claims to having improved the facilitation of reading skills and being capable of actually improving the facilitation of reading skills (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:81). The teachers and I thus had to generate evidence to support our claims and keep records of how we gradually passed the milestones (McTaggart, 1989:2-3).

5.2.3 Emancipatory action research

Emancipatory action research made it possible for me to gradually take positive action to address and resolve the teachers' problems in a collaborative and critical way, improve and understand their situation, and transform and change the conditions that hamper improvement (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:303; Grundy, 1987:154; Makoelle, 2012:84; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:324; Zuber-Skerritt, 1996:3&5). As critical praxis, emancipatory action research implies that the teachers were able to take action on the basis of their reflection on situations and to resume control over their lives (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:302; Masters, 1995:6; O'Brien, 2001:7).

The emancipatory character of action research implies that the Grade 1 teachers were assisted to gradually rise above the situations that jeopardised chances of their development and determination and began to question and challenge prevailing value systems while enhancing values such as equity, co-operation and equality (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:302; Strydom, 2005:414). The emancipatory nature of action research presented a great challenge to the Grade 1 teachers because they were still dictated to by the policies within the education system and the existing rigid hierarchical structures in the Department of Education and at the schools. However, they did take some positive steps towards empowering themselves, slowly showing evidence of epiphanies or illuminative experiences by which they demonstrated improvement of the understanding of their practice with regard to how the NCS and the FfLC policies influence the facilitation of the

development of reading skills (Stringer, 2004:97). There was also evidence of improvement with regard to the pedagogical knowledge pertaining to reading and the methodologies applicable to improving the facilitation of the development of reading skills.

5.3 AN OVERVIEW OF THE DESIGN

The formulation of the research question was triggered by the reports of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study of 2006 (PIRLS 2006), of the two cycles of the Systemic Evaluations of 2001/2, and the second one of 2007. These reports showed that Foundation Phase learners in South Africa performed poorly in reading (Chapter 1:1.3). The situation was more serious in the schools in which learners used African Languages as a Home Language (HL) and Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). Another factor which emerged from the Systemic Evaluation report of 2003 that contributed to the learners' poor performance was that South African teachers were not happy with their own practice (Chapter 1:1.1).

Having a professional interest in the teaching of Sesotho at the Faculty of Education in the University of the Free State I was concerned with the quality of students who enrolled for the Sesotho Literacy modules ELO 112 and 122. The student teachers who registered for these modules were trained in and prepared to facilitate the teaching and learning of Sesotho as Home Language at the primary schools after completing the four-year B. Ed. degree for the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase. Most of the students who registered for the Sesotho Literacy modules ELO 112 and 122 had to choose either Sesotho or Afrikaans as the second language proficiency in addition to English. They usually chose Sesotho as an easy option, much to their frustration when they realised that the quality of pedagogical knowledge covered in the modules was very advanced. It was also disappointing to observe how the student teachers taught Sesotho when they went out for practice teaching, a realisation that forced me to think about what challenges Foundation Phase teachers experienced in facilitating the development of reading skills in Sesotho and what could be done to assist, hence this study.

As a response to the educational crisis that learners are not able to read effectively and with meaning, I, therefore, decided to be a catalyst of change in assisting the Foundation Phase teachers to improve how they facilitate the development of reading skills at Grade 1. Nzwala's (2007) M. Ed. Dissertation investigated the problem of teaching reading at Grade 1 in mother tongue in Namibia. His focus was on understanding the teachers' beliefs about reading and how reading should be taught based on their teacher training programmes and personal experiences. He used a case study as his methodology. I am using participatory and emancipatory action research in order to assist the Grade 1 teachers to improve how they facilitate the development of reading skills. Nzwala's study (2007) is one of the main differences from other studies of limited scope which describe aspects of the concept 'reading'.

Inspired by the writings of various authors (Altrichter *et al.*, 2002:1; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007:278; Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998:23; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:9; McNiff, 2002:3; McTaggart, 1989:1; O'Brien, 2001:4; Waters-Adams, 2006:5; Zuber-Skerritt, 1996:3), I adopted the model of the spiral of action research cycle proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart which is based on Kurt Lewin's work .

My qualitative action research investigation unfolded in spirals of action research cycles which not only ensured adequate responsiveness during the study but also allowed the data to determine how the next spiral cycle should unfold (Dick, 1993:12). Each cycle provided evidence of where the cyclical process began and how it was concluded by applying the four phases of *planning, acting, observing and reflecting*. The information gained from the data informed what should happen in the next cycle.

The achievement of the research purpose was determined by the response to the main research question, which in addressing, I adhered to the framework, provided by McNiff and Whitehead (2011:120) and Waters-Adams (2006:15), who suggest that an action researcher must provide answers to the questions posed below, albeit adapted to the uniqueness of each research study:

- What is my concern?
- Why am I concerned?

- What kinds of data will I gather to show why I am concerned?
- What can I do about it?
- What will I do about it?
- What kind of data will I gather to show the situation as it unfolds?
- How will I test the validity of my claim(s) to knowledge?
- How will I ensure that any conclusions I reach are reasonable, fair and accurate?
- How will I modify my concerns, ideas and practice in light of my evaluations?

5.3.1 Spiral of action research cycle

The above mentioned model (Figure 5.2) of the spiral of action research cycle reflects a process that is continuous and iterative, that is, it indicates further research and development as the cycles develop into more cycles. My action research spiral model (Figure 5.3) unfolds into two cycles, namely; Cycle 1 in which the researcher, partly with the co-researchers, conducted an awareness workshop for the teachers and in Cycle 2 the teachers implemented the guidelines. Cycle 1 ran its normal course of *planning, acting, observing* and *reflecting*. Having gone through the four phases of Cycle 1, new insights and understanding which emerged throughout the cycle, led to the fifth phase, *re-planning*. This phase did not complete the cycle by linking up to the original plan in Cycle 1, but rather left the cycle open for new dimensions with the view to develop more cycles, hence the *spiral of action research cycle* as the heading suggests. The product of *re-planning* was a revised plan which informed how Cycle 2 should develop with focus on the implementation of the guidelines.

Cycle 2 also comprised four phases, having its own *planning* phase, which basically covers the implementation of the guidelines. However, the *action* phase in Cycle 2 coiled into three spiral cycles with each spiral cycle in turn completing a cyclical process of *planning, acting, observing, reflecting and re-planning (revised plan)*. Spiral Cycle 1 addressed the implementation of the guidelines. Spiral Cycle 2 dealt with improving the implementation of the guidelines. Spiral Cycle 3 addressed the assessment of the implementation of the guidelines. Nonetheless, after completing the reflection phase, I did not proceed to the *re-planning* phase of Spiral Cycle 3 so

that it could open for further research in refining and improving the implementation of the guidelines.

Cycles 1 and 2, on the left hand side of Figure 5.3 below do not complete the intervention, but they show potential to develop into new cycles arising as a result of further research. The Spiral Cycles 1, 2 and 3, on the right hand side of Figure 5.3 also indicate possibilities for further research in refining the implementation of the guidelines. The implication is that the processes do not draw to an end when I complete my study. Figure 5.3 below indicates the adapted model of spiral of action research cycles used in the study.

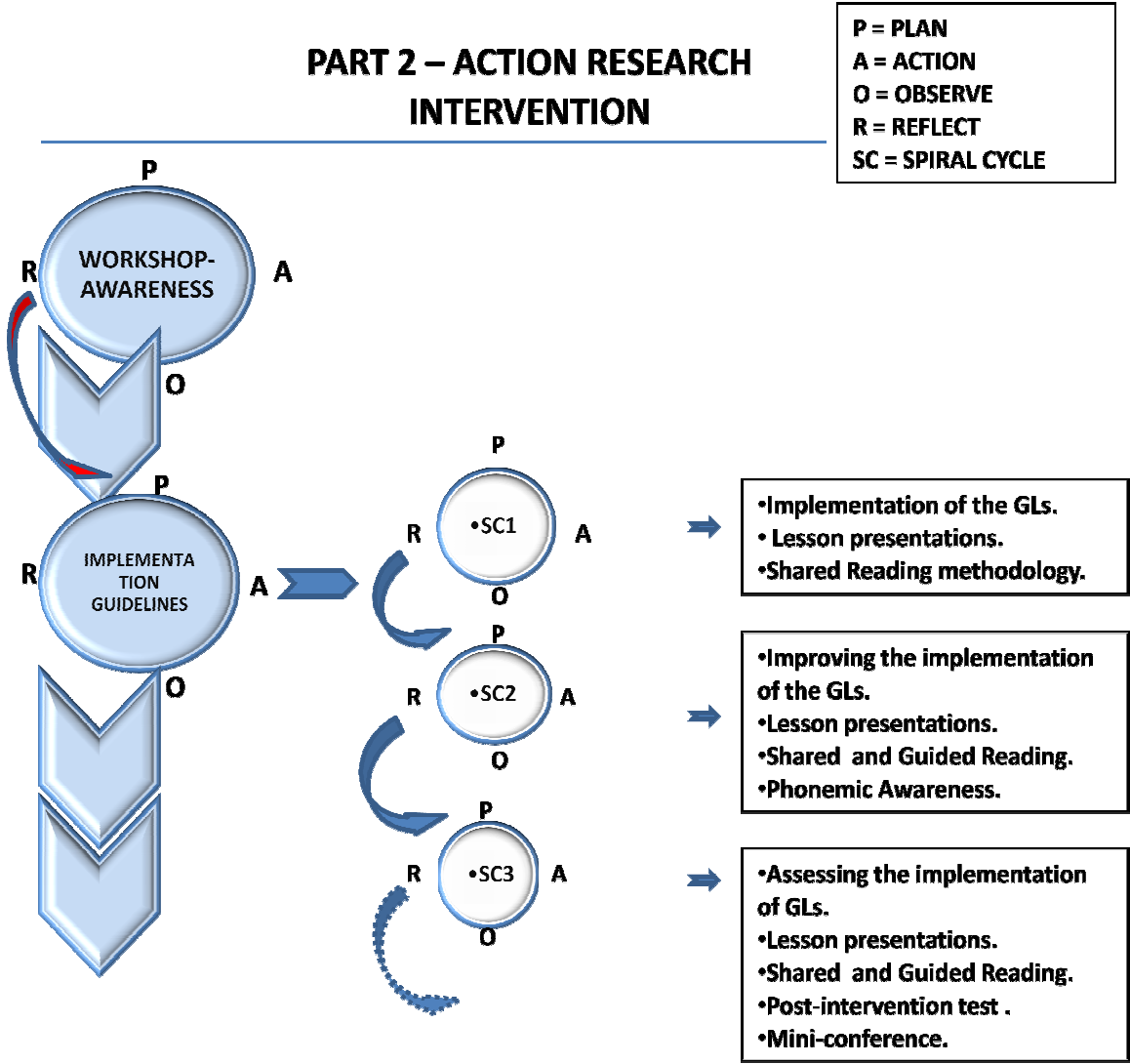


Figure 5.3: The adapted model of spiral of action research cycles

5.3.2 Conducting the Workshop: *Empowering teachers: Working with the head, heart and hand* in Cycle 1

In Cycle 1, the *planning* phase entailed preparing for a two-day workshop on the empowerment of Foundation Phase educators. It was held at the University of the Free State in Winkie Direko Building, Room 33 on the 27-28th May 2011 entitled: *Empowering teachers: Working with the head, heart and hand*. The aim was to create awareness about some issues pertinent to facilitating the development of reading skills and to provide opportunities for the selected Grade 1 teachers to improve their understanding of their facilitative role in the development of reading skills, with the following objectives guiding the sequence of activities:

- to make teachers aware of the progression and continuity from C2005 to the NCS and the FfLC;
- to clarify the concept *reading*;
- to demonstrate how Grade 1 learners read;
- to make teachers aware of the importance of integrating activities from different components in a lesson plan; and
- to make teachers aware of the interrelatedness of the head, heart and hand in developing reading.

My plan, in Cycle 1, covered the following issues:

- ensure that the teachers gradually participated as co-researchers;
- decide on the teachers who would attend the workshop;
- inform the teachers about the arrangements to be made in preparation for the workshop; and
- make teachers aware that the workshop would help us formulate guidelines in the way the teachers should prepare and present Sesotho reading lessons.

The details of how the other phases of the cyclical process of action research in Cycle 1 unfolded, namely *acting*, *observing*, *reflecting* and *re-planning*, are presented in Chapter 7.

5.3.3 Implementing the guidelines in Cycle 2

In reflecting on how Cycle 1 took place, new insights and understandings which emerged, necessitated a revised plan for implementation in Cycle 2. The revised plan for Cycle 2 necessitated the co-researchers (the selected Grade 1 teachers and I) to come together and prepare for the implementation of the guidelines.

5.3.3.1 *Planning*

Part of planning was to visit the teachers at Schools B and D to check whether they were maintaining the momentum set at the workshop and gave them feedback on the *pre-intervention test* they had written in Chapter 7 (7.3). As co-researchers we agreed on several issues prior to the implementation of the guidelines in Cycle 2:

- give teachers feedback on the *pre-intervention test* they wrote at the workshop (me);
- formulate and adopt the guidelines (teachers and me);
- finalise the process of purchasing reading books to be used in facilitating the development of reading skills (me);
- agree on the lesson planning template which would guide the teachers in lesson preparation (teachers and me);
- unpack the concepts used in the lesson preparation template such as *aim*, *objectives*, *situation analysis* and how to do the *reflection* at the end of each lesson (teachers and me);
- encourage the teachers to prepare and present the lessons in Sesotho, taking into cognisance the time allocated to different activities of a Literacy lesson unit days (teachers and me);
- understand the importance of determining the focus of each lesson, depending on the aspect to be treated, such as vocabulary, phonemic awareness and word recognition (teachers);
- decide on the dates on which the lessons would be presented (teachers and me) and
- observe the proceedings (teachers and me).

A detailed discussion on how Cycle 2 unfolded and how the teachers implemented the guidelines in Spiral Cycle 1, 2 and 3, how the process was

observed and what reflections were made is given in Chapter 8. Below I present an outline of how the spiral cycles occurred.

5.3.3.2 Acting

The *acting* phase developed into the following three spiral cycles:

a) Spiral Cycle 1: Implementing the guidelines

The teachers implemented the guidelines by means of lesson presentations which were video recorded. I observed how the lessons were presented, gave constructive feedback on each lesson, suggested areas of improvements and reflected on how Spiral Cycle 1 took place. At the end of each spiral cycle I rated the teachers' performance in implementing the guidelines. The findings emerging from Spiral Cycle 1 occurred resulted into a revised plan which initiated Spiral Cycle 2.

b) Spiral Cycle 2: Improving the implementation of the guidelines

Spiral Cycle 2 built on the momentum set in Spiral Cycle 1. The focus in Spiral Cycle 2 was to refine and streamline the implementation of the guidelines. The revised plan in Spiral Cycle 2 was a product of re-planning that took place in Spiral Cycle 1. In order to put action into the revised plan in Spiral Cycle 1, the teachers and I agreed on the following issues:

- the lessons should show a balance in the integration of the components of literacy development;
- the *Shared Reading* methodology needed to be complemented by *Guided Reading*;
- teachers needed to increase phonemic awareness activities in their lessons; and
- teachers needed strategies to deal better with group activities.

I present an-depth discussion on the *acting*, *observing*, *reflecting* and *revised planning* phases of Spiral Cycle 2 in Chapter 8.

c) *Spiral Cycle 3: Assessing the implementation of the guidelines*

The reflections in Spiral Cycles 1 and 2 set the tone for Spiral Cycle 3 to take place. Spiral Cycle 3 took the form of a two-day workshop, entitled *Observation and assessment of performance*. It is the culmination of the intervention to assist Grade 1 teachers to improve their facilitation of the development of reading skills.

The planning phase for Spiral Cycle 3 included the following:

- make the necessary arrangements for the workshop to take place (the teachers and me);
- ensure that the teachers' presentations were assessed by a constituted panel (the teachers and me);
- assess the success / non-success of the implementation of the guidelines (the teachers and me); and
- allow teachers to assess their involvement in the study.

Specific details of how Spiral Cycle 3 occurred follow in Chapter 8.

5.3.3.3 *Observing*

Phase 3 is an overview of the observations that took place iteratively throughout all the spiral cycles (Chapter 8). In this phase, the selected Grade 1 teachers and I observed how my involvement with them assisted them in improving their facilitative role in developing the learners' reading skills. The teachers demonstrated understanding of the guidelines, which they adopted as their own. We observed how some of them gradually gained confidence in implementing the guidelines in the lessons they presented. As they presented more lessons we also observed how a few struggled to capture the value attached to the guidelines. However, with support and motivation, they improved the implementation of guidelines except for one teacher, who I believe still needs further support and motivation to own the implementation of the guidelines.

5.3.3.4 *Reflecting*

This phase also happened iteratively throughout the spiral cycles. In phase 4, I assumed the role of meta-researcher. I reflected on how my intervention helped the Grade 1 teachers to understand their facilitative role in the development of reading

skills as they implemented the guidelines, how they performed in the *post-intervention test* and the meanings I attached to their epiphanic moments. The aspect that featured prominently about their participation in the intervention was the Grade 1 teachers appreciated and valued the experience of collaborating with other teachers. The implication is that teacher collaboration, as Makoelle (2012:88) asserts, is necessary for their development and empowerment. In reflecting on my involvement with the teachers, I realised that teachers still need regular support and workshops to enhance their knowledge and skills. I realised that some teachers took long to adapt to the guidelines and that they need extra support and motivation to assist them to take ownership of improving the learners' reading skills. Chapter 9 captures the details of the reflections on the intervention.

5.4 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Before describing the selection of participants for my study, two key concepts require clarification. First, *population* refers to a total set of people and their settings or things with which the research problem is concerned and from which the participants in the study will be selected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:129; Strydom, 2005:193). Second, *qualitative sampling* is always purposive or purposeful, to allow for the inclusion of diverse knowledge and perspectives of the participants who are likely to affect the issue, to make comparisons and to focus on specific issues or cases without generalising (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:161; Gray, 2009:180; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:326; Silverman, 2000:104; Stringer, 2004:50). However, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:158&161) are uneasy about using the concepts *population* and *sample* in qualitative research, preferring to talk about *individuals* and *groups*, since the latter represent themselves. The selection of participants is a serious issue and must be carried out according to clear criteria (Creswell, 1998:118).

For the purpose of an in-depth study, the discussion above justifies my initial selection of 13 Grade 1 teachers, being information-rich individuals or groups, and the classrooms where they taught learners how to read. The fewer the groups to be studied in detail, the deeper the insights and the greater the utility of information obtained. This is beneficial when seeking typical and divergent data (McMillan &

Schumacher, 2010:326; Stringer, 2004:50; Strydom & Delpont, 2005:329). My initial selection of the participants comprised 13 Grade 1 teachers from four primary schools from a total of nine primary schools in Mangaung, where Sesotho is taught as HL and used as the LoLT. All the 13 Grade 1 teachers were selected from four primary schools in Motheo Educational District in the Mangaung region, the selection proving effective in minimising time, expense and resource constraints, and allowing for easier accessibility to them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:100; Stringer, 2004:50; Strydom, 2005:194).

Although the Grade 1 teachers selected as participants were all information-rich groups, there were differences of meanings with regard to how they facilitated the development of reading skills. This was due to the training and support they had received from the DoE and from the two non-governmental organisations (NGOs), namely READ Educational Trust and the Molteno Project. The difference of meaning was also brought about by the influence of the READ and the *Breakthrough to Literacy (BTL)* reading programmes, which were piloted at certain schools. In considering that the two programmes had dominated the teaching of reading in the previous few decades, I employed *maximum variation* sampling in order to obtain the greatest differences of meaning amongst Grade 1 teachers who based their teaching on those reading programmes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:115; Lincoln & Guba, as cited in Gray, 2009:182; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:327). *Maximum variation* sampling justifies my selection of three Grade 1 teachers from School A because they were trained and supported by READ Educational Trust. Three Grade 1 teachers were selected from School D who received training and support from the Molteno Project and used their *BTL* programme. Five Grade 1 teachers were selected from School B and two from School C. These teachers had not received any training or support from any of the two NGOs. The Grade 1 teachers from Schools B and C formed part of the majority of the group of Foundation Phase teachers who had to change over to the NCS and align their teaching to OBE. I considered the inclusion of the Deputy Director for Foundation Phase in the Free State as an information-rich key participant. The selected Grade 1 the teachers are females.

In considering the issue of accessibility to the participants, I selected teachers from two schools in Bochabela, adjacent to each other. The other two were situated in

Rocklands, but within walking distance of each other. In ensuring that the names of the schools remain anonymous, they will be identified by the symbols A, B, C, and D. The selection of the participants is as follows:

- three Grade 1 teachers from School A followed the READ programme;
- three Grade 1 teachers from School D followed the Molteno Project (*BTL* programme);
- five Grade 1 teachers from School B had not been assisted by any NGO, but were NCS aligned;
- two Grade 1 teachers from School C had not been assisted by any NGO, but were NCS aligned; and
- the Deputy Director for Foundation Phase in the Free State.

All the 13 Grade 1 teachers from the four primary schools participated in the in-depth situation analysis. I also interviewed the Deputy Director of the Foundation Phase in the Free State.

5.4.1 Selection of participants for Cycle 1

Having determined new criteria for the selection of participants on the basis of the findings in the in-depth situation analysis, it was no longer necessary to have all the 13 Grade 1 teachers advancing to Cycle 1. I therefore reduced them to 7, retaining those from Schools B and D only. The selection was as follows:

- two Grade 1 teachers and two Grade 2 teachers from School D (one of the two Grade 1 teachers was not active in the study); and
- four Grade 1 teachers from School B.

Although all the participants shared some common problems, the degree of severity varied considerably and so was considered as one of the criteria for the selection of participants for the Cycle 1. As a result, teachers from Schools A and C were not selected to continue their participation in Cycle 1. The lack of materials and overcrowding at Schools A and C was not as serious as in Schools B and D, with teachers at School C reporting no problems of overcrowding. In 2010 they had taught only two Grade 1 classes with an average of 30 learners, whereas School A teachers had an average of 40 learners in each class, a number which is quite manageable. The teachers at School A and C did not experience an acute problem related to

shortage of reading books, in comparison to Schools B and D. At the beginning of 2011, all systems were place, which indicated the commitment of the School Management Teams (SMTs) to buy reading books for the learners.

The main criterion was to select few information-rich participants for the sake of an in-depth study which should provide evidence of their improvement. The teachers from Schools B and D experienced all the problems mentioned in the in-depth situation analysis. So, when those teachers became conscious of their deprivation and disempowerment, they decided to take action to change their situation and improve the facilitation of the development of reading skills in the face of all the challenges they were experiencing. The situation at School B remained consistent in 2010, when I started with the in-depth situation analysis, except that there were only four Grade 1 classes in 2011. This was due to the decrease in the number of new Grade 1 learners who registered at the beginning of 2011.

In contrast, the situation at School D presented a great challenge for me. Although the Grade 1 teachers selected from School D had facilitated the development of reading skills based on the *BTL* reading programme, the situation had changed. In 2009, the SMT at School D had implemented a rotating system whereby all the Grade 1 teachers proceed to Grade 2 with their learners until they complete Grade 3. When the learners were promoted to the Intermediate Phase the teachers return to Grade 1 to start with a new cohort of Grade 1 learners.

In 2010, when I started with the in-depth situation analysis, it was the first time the selected teachers had been allocated to teach Grade 1 learners and were not acquainted with the *BTL* reading programme since only Grade 1 teachers had received intensive training on the programme. The implication was that the selected Grade 1 teachers for participation in my study had never received any specialised training from READ or *BTL*. The more experienced Grade 1 teachers with regard to facilitating the development of reading skills through the *BTL* programme were no longer teaching Grade 1 learners and had proceeded to Grade 2 with their learners. Nonetheless, in 2010 when I started with my field work, the *BTL* programme was no longer in use at the Foundation Phase because the Department of Education had

started with the implementation of the Foundations for Learning Campaign in 2008 at all primary schools across the country (Chapter 4:4.2.3).

The new situation in 2011 presented two options. The first one was to start with a new set of Grade 1 teachers, who did not have any information about the study. The second option was to continue with the Grade 2 teachers who had participated in the in-depth situation analysis in 2010. In view of the fact that Grade R to 3 teachers all belong to the Foundation Phase, I decided for option two and retained the original participants. However, only one Grade 1 teacher (T3D) of the three who had participated in the in-depth situation analysis from 2010 was available to continue in 2011. The one teacher could no longer participate in the study due to personal reasons. The other had resigned and was replaced by the newly appointed Grade 2 teacher (T2D), who was eager to participate in the study. As a result, I had two Grade 2 teachers (T2D and T3D) responsible for teaching Grade 1 learners in 2010 as active participants. The reason behind this decision was that the two Grade 2 teachers were still motivated and committed to continue for the sake of their own empowerment. Another motivating factor for my decision to keep the Grade 2 teachers in the study was that only one Grade 1 teacher (T1D), the HoD of the Foundation Phase, was willing to participate in the study. There were three Grade 1 teachers at School D. Teacher one (T1D) was a willing participant. Teacher two was hesitant to participate because of lack of experience in teaching Grade 1 classes. However, she was always available with the others in the study and I labelled her as T4D. Teacher three was not interested in the study, leaving the eventual composition of the participants in Cycle 1 as follows:

- one Grade 1 teacher and two Grade 2 teachers from School D who were active in the study;
- one Grade 1 teacher from School D who was not active; and
- four Grade 1 teachers from School B.

5.4.2 Selection of participants for Cycle 2 and Spiral Cycles 1, 2 and 3

All the participants in Cycle 1 continued with their participation in Cycle 2 and its Spiral Cycles 1, 2 and 3. In addition to the seven active participants in my study, the following were also included as participants in Spiral Cycle 3:

- one representative of the SMT from each school;
- my study leader;
- the researcher; and
- non-active Grade 1 teacher (T4D) from School D.

5.5 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH CONCEPTS RELEVANT TO MY INVESTIGATION

It was important that my qualitative investigation addressed *validity* in order to maintain the *trustworthiness*, *authenticity* and *credibility* of my findings, whilst addressing *reliability* ensured the *dependability*, *consistency* and *replicability* of my findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:180&199; De Vos, 2005:345-346; Gray, 2009:190&194; Nieuwenhuis in Maree, 2007:80). *Validity* and *reliability* are so closely interwoven that it is difficult to discuss one of them without mentioning the other one (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:133; Nieuwenhuis in Maree, 2007:80). The other two concepts, which are just as contentious as *validity* and *reliability* within the context of qualitative action research, are *reflexivity* and *objectivity*. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:8-9) describe *objectivity* as procedures of data collection and analysis which demand a “*single reasonable*” interpretation, without taking into consideration possibilities of bias and subjectivity. Since I was instrumental in the way my research unfolded, I could not bracket issues of subjectivity, but had to deal with the subjective nature of my involvement with the Grade 1 teachers and learners. Therefore, any discussion on *objectivity* would be a contradiction. In order to address subjectivity, I suspended prior assumptions and became sufficiently immersed in the study as a means of understanding how the facilitation of reading was taking place at Grade 1 classes from the teachers’ perspectives.

On the other hand, *reflexivity* served as a means of acknowledging that my history, being a Mosotho and having trained originally as a primary teacher, influenced how the study developed (Lichtman, 2006:202-206; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:332-333).

5.5.1 Validity

Validity refers to the *credibility, transferability and dependability* of the findings of my study, which depended on honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data obtained and of the participants I approached (Maxwell, 1996:87; Stringer, 2004:56-59). In order to maintain the integrity of my study I used the instruments that measured what was intended (Gray, 2004:90; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:133; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:133). For instance, in order to ensure that my study met the requirements of *credibility*, I observed how the selected Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills as a true reflection of their experiences as they are lived and perceived by them. I also conducted the interview to obtain an understanding of the problems that they were experiencing in facilitating the development of reading skills, before we decided on how to resolve those problems (Guba & Lincoln, 1982:246; Krefting, 1991:215; Shenton, 2004:64). The participants gave honest and rich responses which were helpful in determining the problems the Grade 1 teachers experience in facilitating the development of reading skills and set the tone for resolving those problems. The action plans geared towards solving those problems were drawn from the data (Stringer, 2004:56-57).

To further ensure the *credibility* of my study I maintained agreement between the explanations I gave of how Grade 1 teachers facilitated the development of reading skills and how they planned to improve their practice and the realities of the classroom settings from which the phenomena were studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:330). My regular visits to the Grade 1 classes made me realise how the severity of overcrowding, teacher and learner absenteeism and lack of reading books, negatively influenced the facilitative role of the teachers in the development of reading skills (Stringer, 2004:57).

The issue of *transferability* only surfaces when the descriptions of the context and the participants are so thick and detailed that other people could possibly apply the research to their own situations. In order to meet the criterion of *transferability*, I had to ensure I provided as much detail as I possibly could about how the Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills to allow the readers to make the transfer themselves (Guba & Lincoln, 1982:247; Krefting, 1991:216; Shenton, 2004:69-70).

My study demonstrates a degree of *dependability* since the research processes are clearly defined and can be put under scrutiny, through audit trails (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:149; Shenton, 2004:71; Stringer, 2004:57). *Dependability*, in particular, involves processes of member checks or respondent validation, debriefing by peers, triangulation, prolonged engagement in the field, reflexive journals and independent audits (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:202; Stringer, 2004:59). In my case, Grade 1 teachers who participated in the action research component were co-researchers, a status that gave them a privilege to check the elements of *dependability* and trustworthiness of the findings in those spiral cycles in which they were involved as co-researchers. It also gave them an entitlement to be informed of every action that we intended to take and were part of the decision-making in how the action would be implemented. This action partly covered the issue of *respondent validation*, which means returning my research report to the participants and recording their reactions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:202).

For the sake of *dependability*, I gave explicit details of all the processes that took place in my study. This information would benefit the next researcher who wishes to replicate the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1982:247; Krefting, 1991:216; Shenton, 2004:71). However, Krefting (1991:216) warns that if this study is repeated, the next researcher must consider the “uniqueness of the human situation” and focus on the participants’ experience rather than seeking identical repetition. In order to ensure dependability of this study, I informed the participants of all the processes of action research in which they would be involved.

I was also cognisant that validity is not an absolute state, but an attempt to minimise invalidity and maximise validity (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:133). In my interactions with the data and the participants I guarded against bias which arose as a result of the influence of their subjectivity, opinions and perspectives (O’Brien, 2001). To minimise bias I was cautious not to select data which fitted my existing theory or preconceptions or was obvious (Maxwell, 1996:87-88). In maximising validity I captured and understood the meanings the Grade 1 teachers gave to the data and inferences drawn from it. Since validity does not apply only to one stage of the research process I was conscious that I must maintain it throughout (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:133; Mouton, 2002:109)

5.5.1.1 Types of validity

In order to declare confidence in the results of my study, I now demonstrate how the different types of validity impacted on my study.

a) Internal validity

To ensure that my study respected *internal validity* I ascertained that the explanations I gave regarding the facilitating of reading skills at Grade 1 could be sustained by the data and that the findings gave an accurate description of the phenomenon being studied (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:135; Gray, 2009:190). In order to ensure that my study reflected *internal validity* I had to maintain “*self reflective criticality*” by continuously checking my interpretations and verifying the accuracy of the data with the Grade 1 teachers, with assistance from my co-supervisor and supervisor (Gray, 2009:190).

b) External validity

The issue of *external validity* may only be confirmed when findings are transferred to and compared with other situations, as opposed to being generalised (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:137; De Vos, 2005:346; Gray, 2009:156; Merriam, 1998:201&207). However, I facilitated transferability of my findings by providing rich descriptions of how Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills and how they have improved. These descriptions followed in the next chapters.

c) Content validity

Content validity is important because it is concerned with the extent to which the research instruments cover fairly and comprehensively the items or the domains which set out to be studied. For example, the interview questions covered every aspect related to how Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills in Grade 1 classes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:138; Gray, 2009:157). More details on this issue follow in the next chapter.

d) Ecological validity

In adhering to *ecological validity* I was conscious not to manipulate conditions prevailing in the natural settings of the participants and I portrayed realities as

they manifested themselves in the social situations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:138). It was necessary to provide accurate and clear descriptions of how Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills and how they intend to improve their practice without any distortions. For instance, the Grade 1 teachers could not suggest to the learners that they stay away from school on days when I was going to observe their lesson, perhaps with the intention of conducting research on fewer learners or selecting only the more able ones to participate in the reading lessons. However, the situation at School D did necessitate that we used the Grade 2 teachers to teach Grade 1 learners in those learners' classroom.

e) Cultural validity

In order to address *cultural validity* in my study I was sensitive, respectful and appreciative of the cultural values of the teachers and their learners (Morgan, 2005 & Joy, 2003, as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:139). I demonstrated respect towards *cultural validity* as evidenced by my responses to the following questions:

- *Is the research question understandable and of importance to the target group?*
 - Yes, it is. Grade 1 teachers understand that if they lay solid foundations in developing learners' reading skills as early as in Grade 1, then learners will not experience reading difficulties as they proceed to higher grades.
- *Is the researcher the appropriate person to conduct the research?*
 - Yes, I am. I am very knowledgeable in the field of primary schooling and in developing reading. I am currently involved in the training of Foundation Phase Pre-service teachers, as a lecturer in the Early Childhood and Foundation Phase Education. I trained as a primary school teacher and taught at a primary school before I moved to the Further Education and Training Phase. I completed my master's degree with specialisation in the Foundation Phase. I am now busy with my Ph.D. involving Grade 1 teachers and learners.
- *Are the sources of the theories that the research is based on appropriate for the target culture?*

- The sources are still predominantly reflecting Western culture. But I am capable of always linking those theories to the cultural context of the Basotho teachers and learners.
- *Are the possible results of the research of potential value and benefit to the target culture?*
- Definitely, yes. The Grade 1 teachers are gradually taking ownership of the process of assisting learners to be fluent readers regardless of the challenges they face. They will benefit from the results of the study because as co-researcher they are driving the process and already enjoy some milestones of their achievements.

Another advantage in adhering to *cultural validity* in my study is that I am a Mosotho researcher, who understands the academic and cultural life worlds of the teachers and the learners. My presence did not intimidate the teachers and their learners because we communicated in Sesotho in all our interactions and we understood one another very well.

f) *Catalytic validity*

McNiff and Whitehead (2011:163) maintain that in observing *catalytic validity* in the study the participants are provided with opportunities to gain experiences that help them improve their positions. *Catalytic validity* is understood from the perspective of critical theory (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:26 &139), which aims to empower the participants to:

- realise a society that is based on equality and democracy for all its members;
- change situations and phenomena;
- emancipate the disempowered; and
- redress inequality and promote individual freedoms within a democratic society.

Catalytic validity is of special interest as observing it meant that the Grade 1 and I did not merely demonstrate understanding of the phenomenon of how to facilitate the development of reading skills in Sesotho but also allowed us to take action to help the teachers understand the importance of operating within learning environments that are based on equality and democracy. Working in

such environments nurtures feelings of being appreciated and valued and can improve the facilitation of the development of reading skills (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:139-140). *Catalytic validity* is closely related to Freire's (as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:140) notion of 'conscientisation', which urges the participants to understand and change their situation of oppression to being emancipated.

5.5.1.2 Strategies to enhance validity

I employed *triangulation* and *prolonged* and *persistent fieldwork* as strategies to enhance the validity of my qualitative investigation and provide varying meanings of and insights into how to facilitate the development of reading skills in Grade 1 classes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:136; Gray, 2009:191; Guba & Lincoln, 1982:247; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:330-332). These were to prove useful in strengthening the credibility of my findings.

a) Triangulation

I employed *triangulation*, a strategy also referred to as *multi-method* approach, to obtain convergent data through "cross-validation" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:141; Guba & Lincoln, 1982:247; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:331; Stringer, 2004:64). Through triangulation, I was able to combine interviews, observations and review documents in collecting data necessary to confirm my research findings and to guarantee greater confidence in my findings (Bryman & Bell, 2007:412-413). From the interviews, observations and review of artefacts, I had different sets of data, which I analysed. Flick (2004:182) refers to this type of triangulation as "triangulation of data sets". The more these contrasting methods yielded the same results the greater the confidence was built into my study. Through triangulation I was in a position to add more depth and rigour, thus enriching the process of research. The process of triangulation was useful in circumventing the problem of *method-boundedness*, which comes as a result of using exclusively one method and in encouraging the use of a diversity of materials in arriving at the solutions to the problem under study (Smith, as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:142; Stringer, 2004:64).

Although there are six different types of triangulation, namely *time*, *space*, *combined levels*, *theoretical*, *investigator* and *methodological*, the last is the most appropriate when using different research instruments on the same object of study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:142; Gray, 2009:193). Flick (2004:180-181) categorically states that in using “between method” triangulation, can be applied to contrast between qualitative and quantitative methods, this was not the case because my study is predominantly qualitative. Flick (2004:180-181) further discusses implicit and explicit triangulation whereby in the former situation, the different methods are used in an ad-hoc way and in the latter, the methods of extended participation and field observation are deliberately combined with the use of interviews. In this way the researcher is able to analyse the modes of action and communication. For instance, through interviews, I was able to analyse the Grade 1 teachers’ mode of communication while the observations were helpful in analysing their mode of action so that the teachers could improve how they facilitate the development of reading skills.

b) *Prolonged and persistent fieldwork*

My study demanded *prolonged and persistent fieldwork* in order to enhance validity. The longer the period of data collection the more opportunities were provided to analyse data, to make preliminary comparisons and to refine ideas (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:136; Guba & Lincoln, 1982:247; McMillan & Schumacher 2010:331). My fieldwork started during the second term in 2010. In order to decide on the number of participants to be selected in the study, I visited the primary schools in Mangaung, where Sesotho was taught as HL and used as LoLT, to determine which schools used the *BTL* or *READ* programme and which ones were never involved in these programmes. Based on the findings which emerged from the data I then decided to select Grade 1 teachers from only four schools, and thereafter interviewed the group of teachers from each school, observed their reading lessons and gave each teacher feedback on the lesson she had presented. This process extended well into the fourth term in 2010.

c) *Member checking*

Member checking is a means of allowing participant, in this case the Grade 1 teachers, to verify the data I had captured in the interviews and through observations. After an observation or an interview the teachers and I held informal conversations in which they could add details and confirm the meanings that had emerged during the interview or observation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:136; Guba & Lincoln, 1982:247; McMillan & Schumacher 2010:331; Stringer, 2004:73).

5.5.2 Reliability

The description of *reliability* as a means of ensuring that the instruments used measure consistently whatever they are intended to measure, and in implying that similar findings will be reached if the study is repeated, is contentious (Golafshani, 2003, as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:148; Gray, 2009:193). In pursuance of the latter, Guba and Lincoln (1982:247), in their model of trustworthiness, replace *reliability* with the term *confirmability*. The main focus shifts from confirmability and dependability of the researcher to that of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1982:247; Krefling, 1991:217; Shenton, 2004:72).

In ensuring *confirmability* of my study, I kept safe all the video recordings of the lessons presented by the teachers, the transcriptions of the interviews, the proceedings of the workshops that were conducted and the teachers' journals so that they would be available on request for review purposes. I also made sure that the outcomes of my study were drawn from the data and that those findings could be confirmed by another researcher (De Vos, 2005:347; Gray, 2009:194; Stringer, 2004:59). I also had to give detailed descriptions of how I collected data and how I derived categories (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:149). The transcriptions of the group interviews and summaries of the video-recorded lessons documents reviewed were used to validate and strengthen the findings.

5.5.3 Reflexivity

Reflexivity concerns itself with how I can put myself through self-examination in terms of framing the research question, generating particular data, relating to the participants and developing specific interpretations (Lichtman, 2006:206; McMillan &

Schumacher, 2010:332). This process implies acknowledging, disclosing and having a firm understanding of my part in research and how my participation influences research. I also need to open myself up to the same scrutiny that I apply to Grade 1 teachers involved in my study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:171,310; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:359). My understanding of *reflexivity* entails the following (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:333):

- as recognition of self – personal self awareness;
- as recognition of the other – capturing the essence of the informant, or letting them to speak for themselves;
- as truth gathering – the researcher's insistence on getting it right or being accurate; and
- as transcendence – rising above my own subjectivity and cultural context.

In building *reflexivity* into my study I was able to interrogate certain practices which elicited more information regarding how the Grade 1 teachers could be assisted to improve the facilitation of the development of reading skills in Sesotho (Lichtman, 2006:207). For instance, Grade 1 teachers are expected to teach to policy and in so doing read the policy documents to be conversant with the content knowledge of what the concept *reading* entails. They are also expected to know which reading methodologies and strategies can be used to facilitate the development of reading skills and how to prepare reading lessons. However, in Cycle 1 of the action research, it surfaced that the Grade 1 teachers only had access to the policy documents written in English. In interrogating this issue it was evident that the English policy documents were not useful in assisting teachers to use Sesotho academic language in facilitating the development of reading skills. In interrogating the issue further, the selected Grade 1 teachers became aware that the NCS Sesotho policy documents were actually available, but they did not have any knowledge of that, a gross oversight on the teachers' part. When the teachers and I started working on the Sesotho policy documents to understand how the facilitation of the development of reading should take place, it was a rewarding and empowering experience to realise that the teachers could gain so much information from those policy documents.

5.5.4 Trustworthiness

The description of the concepts *validity* and *reliability* in the previous sections (5.5.1; 5.5.2) brought to prominence the concept *trustworthiness* in this qualitative research. In building constructs such as *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability* into my study, ensured that this study met the criteria of *trustworthiness* as set out in Guba's model of assessing trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1982:246; Krefting, 1991:215; Shenton, 2004:63; 73). The details of how my study met the requirements of trustworthiness are discussed in depth in this chapter (Chapter 5: 5.5.1; 5.5.2).

5.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

I opted for a combination of in-depth open-ended interviews, group interviewing, direct observation, and review of written documents from which I obtained diverse and rich data to provide possible solutions to the problem. One of the major benefits of combining more than one instrument of data collection was to facilitate triangulation, through which I was afforded opportunities for deeper understanding of how Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills and how to improve on the situation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:375; Gray, 2009:184; Lichtman, 2006:115; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:349; Stringer, 2004:64). Since I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis I selected those instruments that enhanced personal interaction with the Grade 1 teachers. In strengthening the trustworthiness of my study and findings I used video and tape recordings during observations of lesson presentations and interviews with the teachers (Gray, 2004:384-385; Stringer, 2004:82).

I assumed different roles at different stages of my study, sometimes having to change my role in response to a change of situation. My initial role in the field was as a *complete outsider*, with no idea of how the participants naturally behaved or conducted teaching and learning activities in their classrooms. At the beginning of my empirical study, when I determined the participants who would be involved in the study, in the teachers' eyes I was just a researcher. I was assumed a *complete outsider*, however, as the frequency of my visits increased and I immersed myself in

the life-worlds of the Grade 1 teachers and learners, the role changed to that of a *complete insider* (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:348-349), making the Grade 1 teachers co-researchers and enabling me to participate in the teaching and learning activities in the classrooms.

5.6.1 Interviews

I used interviews in my study which encouraged face-to-face conversations with Grade 1 teachers using verbal, non-verbal, oral and aural channels of communication (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:349; Gray, 2009:369-370; Lichtman, 2006:117; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:355). Though the interviews, I was able to determine how the Grade 1 teachers facilitated the development of reading skills in Sesotho, what problems they were experiencing and how those could be resolved (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:351; Lichtman, 2006:117; Marshal & Rossman, 1995:80; Van Dalen, 1979:158). Developing rapport and establishing a relationship of trust with the Grade 1 teachers set the tone for genuine participation in the interview and provided useful data (Lichtman, 2006:117; Stringer, 2004:65).

I chose a standardised open-ended interview (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:413; Lichtman, 2006:120-121; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:356), for which I prepared the questions well in advance so that all the groups of Grade 1 teachers would be asked the same questions and in the same order. This type of interview allowed for a degree of flexibility on my part and fewer restrictions on the respondents' answers, because the questions were open-ended (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:353; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:356). However, this type of interview is not only a predetermined list of questions (Lichtman (2006:119-121) but is a process that unfolds in the following stages:

- *advanced planning* - relating to the topic area to be covered in the interview;
- *opening* - which serves as a means of providing preliminary information;
- *getting started* - by developing a rapport and ensuring that all the interviewees are comfortable;
- *the body of the interview* – the critical point is to listen to what is being said; and

- *end of the interview* - thanking the participants.

The interview proceedings were videotaped to capture the verbal and non-verbal responses, transcribed and analysed (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:426).

5.6.1.1 Types of questions in the interview

I combined the *grand tour* and *mini-tour* questions, the former being effective in allowing the selected Grade 1 to share their experiences in an open and non-judgemental way, the latter were used synonymously with the *specific example* questions to encourage participants to clarify an issue and be more specific (Lichtman, 2006:122; Stringer, 2004:68-69).

Examples of *grand tour* questions were:

- What do you do when you teach reading? (*Ke eng seo o se etsang ha o ruta ho bala?*).
- How do you go about teaching reading? Describe. (*O ruta jwang ho bala? Hlalosa.*).
- What activities do you do with the learners when you teach reading? (*Ke diketso dife tseo o di etsang le baithuti ha o ruta ho bala?*).
- What do you use when you teach reading? (*Ke eng seo o se sebedisang ha o ruta ho bala?*).

Examples of *mini-tour* questions were:

- What do you like best about teaching reading? (*Ke eng seo o se ratang haholo mabapi le ho ruta baithuti ba hao ho bala?*).
- What are some of the best practices that work for you in teaching reading? (*Ke ditlwaelo dife tse o sebeletsang ha o ruta baithuti ho bala?*).
- What problems do you experience in teaching reading? (*Ke mathata afe ao o teanang le ona ha o ruta baithuti ho bala?*).
- How do these problems impact on the teaching of reading? (*Mathata aa a amana jwang le ho ruta ho bala?*).
- How can these problems be addressed? (*Mathata aa a ka rarollwa jwang?*).

I received different responses from the participants to the *mini-tour* questions because each participant was able to share information that shed light on other participants' experiences. I concluded the interview by asking teachers to respond to the *closing question*, which allowed them to add anything not addressed during the interview, e.g.:

- Is there anything that you want to add about teaching reading? (*Na ho na le ho hong hoo o ka ho buang ho tlatselletsa mabapi le ho ruta baithuti ho bala?*).

5.6.1.2 Group interviewing

I opted for *group interviews* in order to minimise costs usually incurred in one-to-one interviews and to save time (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:373-374; Lichtman, 2006:129). The use of group interviews ensures certainty of response from the participants. The groups of Grade 1 teachers were identified as interviewees on the basis that they shared certain characteristics of relevance to my study, namely, to facilitate the development of reading skills (Marshall & Rossman, 1995:84; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:363). The other benefit of using group interviews was that I was able to interview Grade 1 teachers as a group, which resulted in a collective group response despite individual differences that emerged in the discussion. In the group interview each teacher was aware of what the other teachers said about how they developed reading and what problems were encountered. In this case, the discussions often yielded diverse responses which might not have emerged through individual interviews. In the case of group interviews there is a possibility of obtaining two versions of an event, allowing a 'cross-check' amongst the participants and group members to complement one another. However, I was cautious not to create antagonism when the participants expressed different views (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:373).

I made sure that the number of participants in the group interview did not exceed six, as a way of encouraging each group member to contribute effectively to the discussions (Stringer, 2004:77). However, Lichtman (2006:130) is of the opinion that the fewer the participants in the group the less the interaction. In my case, the largest group comprised five teachers (School B) and the smallest two (School C), depending on the number of Grade 1 teachers at each of the four schools. In

Schools A and D there were three Grade 1 teachers. Contrary to Lichtman's (2006:130) claim, I found that the fewer the participants the more the interaction. In School C there were only two Grade 1 teachers but their participation in the study was very good.

There are several issues that I bore in mind when conducting group interviews (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:374):

- how to divide my attention and to share out the interviewees' responses – giving them all a chance to speak;
- how to handle people who were too quiet or too noisy, who monopolised the conversation, argued and disagreed with each other;
- how to have individuals answer without forcing them; and
- how to handle a range of very different responses to the same question.

The most convenient settings for conducting the interviews with the Grade 1 teachers were their classrooms. I usually conducted the interviews after 13:30 when the teachers had finished their daily teaching programme and the learners had already left for home. Most of the interviews went well, except for one at School D for which the learners were dressed in casual clothes and the teachers were not doing any actual teaching. I thought arriving early at the school had been a benefit because I enquired if I might proceed with the interview. They gave me permission to interview them in the classroom while they ordered the learners to keep quiet. However the learners' voices could be heard in the background and spoiled the recording, so I had to repeat it.

5.6.1.3 Key informant interview

I employed a *key informant* interview to obtain information from people who had special knowledge about the research topic (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:355). The Deputy Director of the Foundation Phase in the Free State was interviewed as an individual, she being knowledgeable about the implementation of various reading strategies geared to the improvement of reading skills at the Foundation Phase. She was also aware of the problems the teachers experienced in facilitating the development of reading skills. Her directorate also experienced problems in terms of

reaching out to the teachers to provide sufficient assistance, support and assessment.

5.6.1.4 Telephonic interview

I had a *telephonic* interview with a learning facilitator responsible for the *Breakthrough to Literacy (BTL)* reading programme (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:379; Gray, 2009:234 & 391). In the interview, she clarified which schools had previously been on *BTL* and which were on the READ programme. This information was critical in determining the selection of participants, and helped in triangulating the data obtained from the teachers during the preliminary interviews.

5.6.2 Observation

In using *observation* I was able to investigate how the Grade 1 teachers and the learners behave in the teaching and learning environments by using my sight and hearing senses over a period of approximately eighteen months. Consequently, the live data I collected allowed me to gain an insider's perspective of how Grade 1 teachers behave in their natural setting (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:456; Gray, 2009:396-397; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:350; Strydom, 2005:276). I used *less-structured* observation so that data could speak for itself, reflecting honesty and genuineness to the unfolding situation; thus affording me opportunities to give rich descriptions of the unfolding events (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:398).

5.6.2.1 Researcher's role

When I started with the empirical investigation I assumed the research role of *observer-as-participant*, acknowledging my status as a researcher with less influence on the daily proceedings of the participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:404; Lichtman, 2006:141). As my involvement with the Grade 1 teachers intensified I took on a new role of *participant-as-observer*, because I had become part of the social life of the Grade 1 teachers in each school. As *participant observer* I was in a privileged position to observe the experiences of the Grade 1 teachers and the learners not detachedly as an outsider, but amongst them at first-hand (Gray, 2009:399-401; Huysamen, 1994:169). This role presented opportunities for me to participate genuinely and naturally in the daily experiences of these teachers and their learners

as they facilitated the development of reading skills. This research role was useful in strengthening the rapport between the participants and me. The Grade 1 learners became enthusiastic about my visits and gradually began to address me as one of their teachers (Marshall & Rossman, 1995:78-79).

The four schools had different settings, and through participant observation I was able to immerse myself in the following:

a) *Physical setting*

Physical setting included the Grade 1 classrooms and seating arrangements. At School A there were three Grade 1 classrooms in 2010, with much of the learning space utilised as storage for unused furniture and books that were packed at the back. School A was being renovated and the teachers used a platoon system, a situation that made it difficult for effective teaching and learning to take place.

At School B there were five Grade 1 classrooms in 2010, but there were only four in 2011. The school buildings showed signs of neglect and dilapidation. School C had only two Grade 1 classes with an average of 30 learners in each classroom. At School D there were three Grade 1 classes, and learners occupied classes situated in the last block of the building, far from the administration block. Each Grade 1 teacher had an average of 50 learners in a classroom, resulting in overcrowding. In all Grade 1 classes the learners were seated in groups.

b) *Human setting*

Human setting refers to the organisation of Grade 1 teachers in terms of their age and experience. In the four schools all the Grade 1 teachers were females and they had a primary teaching diploma or a certificate. A few, who had the longest teaching experience, were between ages 50-58. The two, who were in their late fifties, were looking forward to their retirement. Most of the teachers were between ages 40-50. There was only one teacher who was in her late thirties. She had registered for an Advanced Certificate in Education to improve her qualifications. In each school, one of the teachers at the Foundation Phase

occupies the position of the Head of Department (HoD). In School A and C, the HoDs were involved in teaching Grade 1 learners. In School D, the HoD was allocated a Grade 1 class in 2011.

c) *Interactional setting*

Interactional setting throws some light on how Grade 1 teachers interact with one another and with their learners. There was a strong sense of collegiality amongst the Grade 1 teachers and their learners at the four schools and they addressed one another in their first names. Their learners addressed their class teacher as *mme* (ma'am). The teachers shared resources and knowledge pertinent to teaching at the Foundation Phase. In schools where learners were overcrowded in the classrooms, teachers experienced problems in maintaining order and discipline.

d) *Programme setting*

Programme setting refers to the physical resources such as books and posters, as well as curricula and their organisation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:397). The learning environments were very attractive. The Grade 1 classrooms were colourful with many pictures, posters and other objects used as teaching media. The learners' workbooks, exercise books and the stationery used daily were kept safely in the locker to circumvent unnecessary loss. The teachers use phonic, vocabulary and sight words posters in facilitating the development of reading bought from READ Educational Trust publisher. All the classrooms had posters on the walls showing different concepts in numeracy, literacy and life skills. However, in Schools A, B and D there was a serious shortage of reading books and teachers had to make photocopies from the few reading books available. They appeared uncertain about what and how to teach as a result of the many curriculum changes frequently implemented. The NCS policy documents which were available at schools were rarely used.

In addition to observing the different settings as stated above, I also observed how Grade 1 teachers presented reading lessons. During the lesson presentations I captured the main ideas by taking down notes then afterwards we discussed how it had progressed. We highlighted problem areas and made suggestions as to how we

could improve the learners' reading skills at Grade 1. We communicated in Sesotho throughout the observations, except on those occasions when my Afrikaans-speaking colleague accompanied me to video record the proceedings, playing the role of *participant researcher* by virtue of his part in corroborating what transpired in the lesson observation and what has been recorded (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:331).

5.6.3 Review of documents and artefacts

Since the implementation of the NCS in 2002, I noticed that Grade 1 teachers made use of a variety of policy documents, learning programmes, lesson preparations, textbooks, teachers and learners' guides, timetables, posters, guidelines, teachers' handbooks and learners' workbooks. These documents contain valuable knowledge about the teaching practice and how to facilitate the development of reading skills. Although the review of documents and artefacts is a *non-interactive* or *non-reactive* strategy (Gray, 2009:428; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:360 & Stringer, 2004:83-84), it was necessary to review them as a supplement to data collected from interviews and observations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:94-95 & 124; Marshal & Rossman, 1995:85; Strydom & Delpont, 2005:314).

For the workshop, which I presented to the teachers in 2011, I reviewed the following NCS policy documents available for the Foundation Phase:

- *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 Schools POLICY. Languages: English-Home Language* (DoE, 2002b);
- *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 Schools POLICY. Overview.* (DoE, 2002a);
- *Tlaleho e Lekotsweng Botjha ya Kharikhulamo ya Naha Bakeng sa Dikereiti R-9. (Dikolong) Leano. Dipuo. Sesotho Puo ya Lapeng/Hae* (DoE, 2002c);
- *Tlaleho e Lekotsweng Botjha ya Kharikhulamo ya Naha. Dihlopha/Dikereiti tsa R-9.Dikolo. Leano. Tjhebokakaretso. Sesotho* (DoE, 2002d);
- *Tlaleho e Lekotsweng Botjha ya Kharikhulamo ya Naha Bakeng sa Dikereiti R-9. (Dikolong). Tataiso ya titjhere tlhahisong ya mananao a ho ithuta. Dipuo* (DoE, 2003b); and

- *Tlaleho e Lekotsweng Botjha ya Kharikhulamo ya Naha Bakeng sa Dikereiti R-9. (Dikolong). Tataiso ya titjhene tlhahisong ya mananao a ho ithuta. Mophato wa Motheo (DoE, 2003c).*

In addition to the NCS policy documents mentioned above, I also reviewed the following FfLC policy documents in order to prepare for the workshop.

- The Foundations for Learning Campaign Government Gazette Number 30880. 2008;
- The National Reading Strategy (DoE, 2008g);
- Teaching Reading in the early grades. A teacher's handbook (DoE, 2008i);
- Foundations for Learning Daily Lesson plans for the First, Second, Third and Fourth terms (DoE, 2008b,c,d,e);
- Foundations for Learning Milestones Checklists: Literacy Grade 1 (New-Day-Day, 2008); and
- National Curriculum Statement General Education and Training Assessment guidelines for Foundation Phase Grades R-3 (DoE, 2008f).

For Spiral Cycle 3, plans were already in the process of being drawn up to implement the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). I reviewed the following English and Sesotho documents:

- CAPS Foundation Phase Home Language Grades R – 3 (DoDE, 2011a);
- Setatemente sa Naha sa Leano la Kharikhulamo le Tekanyetso Dikreiting tsa R-3. Sesotho Puo ya Lapeng (DoBE, 2011b); and
- Phonics and Phonemic Awareness for Foundation Phase 2011 Part 1 (DoBE, 2011c).

5.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a process that allows for the explanation, description, portrayal, interpretation and organisation of the data collected from interviews, observations and review of documents. It involves sorting and sifting through the data. In my qualitative investigation, the processes of data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously and iteratively (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:537; Gray,

2009:493; Lichtman, 2006:164; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:367; Miles & Huberman, 1994:56; Silverman, 2005:152; Stringer, 2004:111). The occurrence of this interwoven process was useful in minimising the problem of dealing with large amounts of data later in the study and making it easier to select in advance pertinent issues which would need future focus. I also managed to reduce data overload by constantly referring to the research questions, which were helpful in selecting relevant data. In order to synthesise and make meaning of the data I organised and explained them inductively, in accordance with how the participants defined and described their situation. Inductive analysis of data allowed the emergence of themes and conclusions to flow from the data itself (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:539; Gray, 2009:495; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:367; Miles & Huberman, 1994:55-56; Silverman, 2005:152).

Data analysis is an intertwined process of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing by means of matrices. I began the process of data reduction as early as in the formulation of my research question, which helped in determining the type of data I required and how I would collect it. This information was crucial in determining which data chunks were relevant for coding, and I presented these in a compact form to allow for final conclusions of the qualitative investigation to be made (Miles & Huberman, 1994:10-11). As a result I was able to identify phenomena then assign codes, categories and themes emerging from the data, noting how they gradually developed into new concepts characterised by thick descriptions and reflexivity (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:537; Gray, 2009:493; Lichtman, 2006:164; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:367; Miles & Huberman, 1994:12; Stringer, 2004:111-112).

5.7.1 Data organisation and preparation

A rigorous process of preparing and organising data was essential in order to facilitate coding data into smaller pieces and generating units of meaning (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:470; Lichtman, 2006:166; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:369; Miles & Huberman, 1994:57). During the data collection, my research assistant video-taped the interviews and the presentation of reading lessons by Grade 1 teachers in order to capture both the spoken words and the non-verbal

communications. It would have been difficult to analyse the raw data from the interviews without transcribing them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:426; Gray, 2009:496; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:370). Since the interviews were conducted in Sesotho they were transcribed and converted into a format which made it easy for analysis before being translated into English. The summaries of the lessons I observed and the remarks or comments about how each reading lesson was presented were neatly typed into coherent units. All video recordings of the lessons were transferred from the video recorder and saved electronically so that they could be available on request. Part of the empirical investigation comprised writing field notes of each school context or settings, which were then neatly typed and kept safe for later use and for triangulation.

5.7.2 Process of coding data

Data coding is a mammoth task which requires qualitative researchers to make decisions about which data they need and which they can discard. Since data coding is essentially a selective process of data analysis, it also occurs iteratively in a backwards and forwards way (Miles & Huberman, 1994:55-56; Lichtman, 2006:164&167; Stringer, 2004:112). I reviewed the coded data from the interviews, observations and documents several times before I could ascertain the relevance of the codes for my study. In the process of coding the data I considered the following steps suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (2010:371-372) in establishing and refining data codes:

- getting a sense of the whole;
- generating initial codes from the data;
- comparing codes for duplication;
- trying out provisional coding; and
- continuously refining the coding system.

5.7.2.1 Determining the codes

In analysing the data I started by determining *codes*, which were helpful in labelling and providing meaning to the units of data or segments (Cohen, Manion & Morrison,

2007:493; Gray, 2009:493; Lichtman, 2006:164; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:370-371; Miles & Huberman, 1994:56; Stringer, 2004:113). As the process of data analysis unfolded it was necessary to continuously refine the codes and leave out those that had become redundant (Lichtman, 2006:168). In my study the coding system was based on the problems the Grade 1 teachers were experiencing in their facilitation of the development of reading skills in Sesotho. In determining the codes it crystallised that the Grade 1 teachers were dealing with a magnitude of problems on a daily basis which negatively affected their facilitation of the development of reading skills. Although the Grade 1 teachers from the four primary schools in Mangaung shared many common problems, for example *lack of materials*, some were context-specific, such as '*late coming of learners*'. Through data analysis it also emerged that the degree of severity of the occurrence of the problems differed from school to school.

Since codes are described as segments of data which stand out as separate entities (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:370), I took cognisance of the following steps suggested by Gray (2009:496) in determining the codes for my study:

- *transcribe the data*: converting notes from the field into a format that makes analysis easy;
- *collect/code/collect*: starting with the coding process immediately data has been collected;
- *familiarisation*: reading through field notes to obtain a holistic view of what is happening;
- *focused reading*: allotting a word or a phrase which seems pertinent to a particular passage;
- *review/amend codes*: removing codes which duplicate the same phenomenon, deciding on the hierarchical order of the codes and sub-categories of codes; and
- *generating theory*: looking for connections between categories and concepts that are emerging from the data.

5.7.2.2 Establishing categories

Having assigned the codes to the phenomena it became easy for me to group the codes (problems) which reflected common characteristics into single *categories* and

sub-categories (Lichtman, 2006:169; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:376-377; Miles & Huberman, 1994:56; Stringer, 2004:113). Gray (2009:500) calls this type of categorisation “theoretical classes”, in the sense that the categories are identified as the process of analysing data is initiated. In forming categories, I looked for evidence that supported or negated the meaning attached to the category, a phenomenon known as “constant comparison” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:377). For instance, it emerged during the process of data collection and analysis that the problem of *absenteeism* was just as rife amongst the teachers as it was with the learners. Teacher absenteeism did not emerge from the interviews but surfaced from observations as my visits to the four primary schools became frequent.

5.7.2.3 Identifying patterns and themes

Discovering patterns helped to demonstrate the interrelatedness of various aspects of the Grade 1 teachers’ situations, how they thought and behaved as they made sense of their life worlds. These patterns and themes flow from the categories and highlight the relationship among categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:378, Miles & Huberman, 1994:69). Lichtman (2006:170) maintains that the fewer the patterns or concepts, the richer the analysis. Two patterns emerged during data analysis, namely facilitating the development of reading skills and the support system. Although both were important I gave priority to the patterns that would help me answer the research question.

The entire process of data analysis, as explained above, occurred after the in-depth situation analysis. The workshop entitled, *Empowering teachers: Working with the head, heart and hand* is the Cycle 1 of my action research. The aim of which was to create opportunities for Grade 1 teachers to improve their understanding of their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. Throughout the cycles of the intervention, I analysed data by triangulating from the interviews, the documents reviewed, how teachers participated at the workshop, their reflections of it and the results from the pre-intervention test which they wrote at the workshop. The insights gained from the data analysis served as a basis for developing the guidelines which were implemented in Cycle 2 and the Spiral Cycles 1, 2 and 3 to improve on the facilitation of the development of reading skills.

5.7.3 Data analysis by means of *Epiphanic Moments*

I also analysed data by the *epiphanic moments* observed during the awareness workshop in Cycle 1 when the Grade 1 teachers showed an understanding of their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. I also analysed more epiphanic moments which I observed in Cycle 2 when teachers were implementing the guidelines by means of the lesson presentations in Spiral Cycles 1, 2 and 3. Stringer (2004:97) uses the term *epiphanic moment* synonymously with the term “illuminative or significant experiences”, as “illuminative moments of crisis, or transformational, turning point experiences, which result in significant changes to people’s perceptions of their lives.” These epiphanic moments may take a variety of forms, either positive or negative, vary in intensity, and emerge instantaneously or gradually. This happens through a “cumulative sense of awareness after an on-going process of experience and reflection” (Stringer, 2004:99-100). With Grade 1 teachers this involved capturing the meanings of what they said, how they felt and how they behaved in terms of understanding their facilitative role in developing their learners’ reading skills (Stringer, 2004:98). In Cycle 1, Cycle 2 and the Spiral Cycles 1, 2 and 3, I allocated labels to the four Grade 1 teachers from School B as T1B, T2B, T3B and T4B. Those from School D were labelled as T1D, T2D and T3D.

In Cycle 1 and 2, I analysed data by triangulating from the lesson presentations, lesson preparations, the teachers’ reflections, reflective journals and epiphanic moments. More details follow in the next chapters.

5.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conducting my study, I established and maintained healthy relations based on trust, transparency, acceptance and respect with the participants (Gray, 2009:69; Lichtman, 2006:56; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:338-339; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:96). I also preserved the dignity of the participants as human beings and avoided instances where they would experience feelings of embarrassment, ridicule and unworthiness (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:84; Gray, 2009:74). In my relationships with them they revealed personal and confidential information that I could not exploit in any way (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:65; McNiff &

Whitehead, 2011:96; Stringer, 2004:53). I could not involve the Grade 1 teachers in my study without their consent, coerce them to participate, withhold information about the true nature of the research, deceive them in other ways, violate the right of self-determination, denigrate them in any way or show disrespect. Therefore, I was honest about the nature of my investigation, so that they knew what they were committing themselves to when they agreed to participate (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:62-63; Gray, 2009:75; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:96). I could not misuse the information they divulged in confidence, violate their privacy in any way or disclose their identities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:64; Gray, 2004:59-61 & 388-390; Stringer, 2004:53).

In order to respect protocol I requested permission from the Department of Education Free State Province to conduct my empirical study with the Grade 1 teachers and their learners at the four selected schools (Appendix A). A letter from my supervisor is attached as Appendix B. Permission was granted (Appendix C). I also requested permission from each principal of the four selected schools to allow the Grade 1 teachers and their learners to participate in my study (Appendix D). A letter to the parents notifying them of my research is attached as Appendix E. A list of interview questions is attached as Appendix F (Gray, 2009; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:338; Stringer, 2004:54).

On arrival at each school I gave the principal copies of the two letters (Appendix B and C) to acknowledge my presence at the schools and my involvement with the Grade 1 teachers and their learners. The principals introduced me to the Grade 1 teachers at each school as well as the HoD of the Foundation Phase. The contents of the letters allayed any fears that I might be a school inspector or a learning facilitator from the DoE who had come to assess them. I reassured the teachers that the theoretical knowledge I would acquire through a literature review would be complementing the practical knowledge of how to facilitate the development of reading skills. I promised to keep them informed of my progress and to share with them the latest developments in the field of reading (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:338). It was a professional incentive to share with them my understandings of the Foundations for Learning Campaign (FfLC) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) documents. I also gave constructive feedback on how they

performed in the lessons. The more constructive feedback they received the more they developed feelings of worthiness, affirmation and appreciation. As my co-researchers, they knew of any progress made and how we moved ahead, thus taking ownership of the process. (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:332; Stringer, 2004:60).

Due to the dynamics that influenced how events unfolded every day, I had to secure an appointment with the teachers before I saw them. Sometimes, even when I had secured an appointment, it would be impossible to honour it due to other commitments which were a priority at their workplace. After every visit I signed a logbook as an endorsement of my visit and as respect for the school protocol. However, as my research assistant and I became regular visitors at the schools, the principals and the deputy principals slackened the formal rules. We could then go straight to the Grade 1 classrooms.

I informed the Grade 1 teachers that their participation would be voluntary and that any participant could withdraw from the study at any time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:43; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:96). Some teachers were a little uneasy about the videotaping of their classroom interactions when they presented the lessons. However, they relaxed when I assured them that those videotapes would be kept safe and not made public without their consent (Stringer, 2004:54). Learners had to be treated the same way as their teachers. I learnt their names and showed respect by addressing them as such. The learners were happy to have two other teachers, my research assistant and I, who gave them assistance when they were engaged with group activities and encouraged them to complete the activities assigned to them. Although they were keen to be video-recorded, which was a motivation for them to participate in the lessons, their eagerness to appear in the videos was not supposed to be used against them if they showed the slightest sign that they did not wish to participate.

After every visit, I thanked the Grade 1 teachers together with their learners for giving their time to my study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:62).

5.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study commenced in 2008, with preliminary readings and investigations on how Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills. Part of the groundwork included paper presentations at conferences and informal discussions with Grade 1 teachers on how they taught reading. In 2008 the teaching and learning activities at the Foundation Phase were still outcomes-based and based on the policies and principles of the NCS. It was expected of Grade 1 teachers that they still adhere to the stipulations of the RNCS Grade R-9 Policy on how to teach languages at different levels. However, the period from 2008 until 2011 saw a spate of heightened curriculum refinement activities. In 2008 the DoE launched the FfLC with the purpose of improving learners' performance in reading and counting. In 2009, when the study was already in progress, the DoE announced its intention to implement the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement at the Foundation Phase (DoE, 2009:62-63).

Each time the DoE refined and streamlined the curriculum meant that I had to take stock of the situation, acquaint myself with those improvements and involve the teachers as well. The process of familiarising myself with the new policy documents caused some delay in implementing the guidelines as part of intervention. For the teachers, the process was overwhelming, primarily because they did not understand the improvements or, more specifically, how to implement them. The consequences were detrimental to teachers' performance on a daily basis. Their morale was low, resulting in lack of motivation, confidence lack or commitment, and poor self-esteem, apathy, self-doubt and a general state of stagnation. This caused delays in terms of the progress I had already made in my study.

The dynamics of each school had some negative consequences for my study. For instance, at School D I was unable to continue with the Grade 1 teachers with whom I started in 2010 when I conducted the in-depth situation analysis. The school had adopted a new system whereby a Grade 1 teacher proceeds to Grade 2 and 3 with her learners. When the learners exit Foundation Phase the teacher returns to Grade 1 class. In that situation I had to maintain some of the Grade 2 teachers who were motivated to carry on in the study. These teachers prepared a lesson for both Grade

1 and 2 learners when I came to observe their lessons. The lessons for the Grade 2 learners were prepared on a higher level than those for Grade 1, a difference evident in the way the former responded to and interacted with their teacher. Although Grade 1 learners were unfamiliar with the teacher they warmed up to her after only one lesson. The benefits were great for these Grade 2 teachers because they had the exposure to facilitating the development of reading skills in both Grade 1 and 2 classes. One of the Grade 1 teachers was transferred to another school and replaced by a new teacher, who then had to take over the Grade 2 learners of the teacher who had left. Of significance here is that Grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers were all Foundation Phase teachers.

The situation at school B was stable, and the same teachers with whom I started in 2010 were still teaching Grade 1. The only difference was that there were five Grade 1 teachers in 2010 and in 2011 only four. The enrolment of Grade 1 learners at this school dropped significantly and one of the Grade 1 teachers had to be placed at Grade 5.

Another limitation to the study arose as a result of hosting the 2010 football World Cup in South Africa. The five-week period during the 2010 football World Cup was declared a school holiday, depriving me access to the teachers and learners and preventing me from finalising the first part of the empirical research. Strike action by teachers immediately after the schools reopened severely delayed my progress. In February 2011, even before the new cohorts of Grade 1 learners could settle into their new environment, the Grade 1 teachers were busy with the Annual National Assessments (ANA), so I postponed the empirical research until later in February. Also delaying my progress was the unavailability of Foundation Phase teachers to take part in my study, as they were busy with assessment from the second week of September 2011 until the schools closed for holidays. The first week of schools reopening was also taken up by compiling the mark schedules and the learners' reports.

5.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have discussed the qualitative nature of the study and its action research component. I described and justified how the design of my investigation unfolded into spirals of action research based on the model of Kemmis and McTaggart, I outlined selection of participants, the research instruments I used, how I collected and analysed data, how I complied with ethical issues and limitations of the study. I decided to involve the Grade 1 teachers as co-researchers so that they could take initiative and ownership in resolving problems pertinent to their practice, which they appreciated as an opportunity for empowerment. They gradually began to reflect on how they could better facilitate the development of reading skills, identify problems that hamper their effectiveness and decide on how they could address some of those problems. As participants and co-researchers they became familiar with issues such as data collection methods as interviews, observations and review of documents. Although I informed them that they could quit whenever they felt uncomfortable, none did.

In the next chapter, I explain how the in-depth situation analysis was conducted.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS FROM THE IN-DEPTH SITUATION ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The in-depth situation analysis forms Part 1 of my empirical study, answering the research question: “How do Grade 1 teachers in some Mangaung schools facilitate the development of reading skills under their prevailing circumstances?” My strategic plan unfolded in six steps. Firstly, I visited the selected Schools A, B, C and D to obtain a holistic picture of how the Grade 1 teachers were facilitating the development of reading skills under their prevailing circumstances. Secondly, I selected the participants from schools, as explained in Chapter 5 (5.4). Thirdly, I described relevant concepts such as *validity, reliability and reflexivity* (Chapter 5: 5.5) as a motivation for selecting such participants. Fourthly, I described the research instruments necessary for conducting the in-depth situation analysis (Chapter 5:5.6). Fifthly, I decided on the procedures to be followed in analysing data I would have collected (Chapter 5:5.7). Sixthly, I explained how I would deal with ethical issues (Chapter 5:5.8) pertinent to my interactions with the participants.

I interviewed the selected Grade 1 teachers from the four primary schools (Chapter 5:5.4). The interview questions are attached as Appendix E. I observed the context of each to determine the conditions under which the Grade 1 teachers were expected to facilitate the development of reading skills. I also observed how teachers presented the reading lessons and video-recorded the proceedings. I then reviewed the documents that the teachers were using. The findings which emerged from the in-depth situation analysis informed how my intervention should be put into action.

6.2 FINDINGS FROM THE IN-DEPTH SITUATION ANALYSIS

The findings that emerged from the in-depth situation analysis are broken down into a number of themes and sub-themes.

6.2.1 Understanding how Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills prior to the intervention

The Grade 1 teachers from each school were interviewed as a group (Chapter 5:5.6.1.2), using questions that covered five major aspects of facilitating the development of reading skills. The first aspect required teachers to explain which *reading activities, methods and media* they used in facilitating the development of reading skills. New understandings and insights which emerged enabled me to draw a holistic picture of how Grade 1 teachers were facilitating the development of reading skills in Sesotho.

In the second aspect the selected Grade 1 teachers elaborated on the *materials and documents* they were using to guide their facilitative role. This revealed some incongruities pertaining to the policy documents supplied by the Department of Education (DoE), notably that the Grade 1 teachers did not read the documents intended to guide them in their facilitative role. The DoE made available the Sesotho policy documents but teachers did not know of their existence. The *Foundations for Learning Campaign* documents were written only in English and provided examples of the English phonics (Chapter 6: 6.2.1.2; 6.3.3).

The third aspect required teachers to explain what they *enjoyed* about facilitating the development of reading skills. Their responses were useful in exposing their sense of pride in developing learners' reading skills, their confidence and motivation. The fourth aspect touched on the things they *hated*. In sifting through this data, I was able to construe the problems these teachers had to deal with in performing their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. The fifth aspect made room for teachers to suggest possible *solutions* to their problems. The teachers' responses in this aspect gave an indication of their readiness and willingness to resolve their own problems. Table 5.7.2 gives all the details to this effect.

The first objective of my study is to determine how the selected Grade 1 teachers in some Mangaung schools facilitate the development of reading skills, so as to enable me to identify problems pertinent to their situations. It is therefore, appropriate that before I embark on presenting the problems I firstly indicate, in Table 6.1 (below),

which reading activities, methods and media Grade 1 teachers use in developing the learners' reading skills. The teachers from the four schools also presented reading lessons to demonstrate how they facilitate the development of reading skills.

Table 6.1: Teacher reading activities, methods and media

TEACHER			
READING ACTIVITIES, METHODS AND MEDIA			
School A	School B	School C	School D
Teacher activities	Teacher activities	Teacher activities	Teacher activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use story telling from Big Book and ask questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start teaching the vowels and then the consonants . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Flash cards to write words and teach learners how to sound those words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use picture and ask learners questions, what do they see?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a picture from the Big book and ask leading questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate capital and lowercase letters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate how they must read. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We also do the flash cards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a poem to highlight the targeted sound. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write the consonants and the vowels on the board and on the poster/chart. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use books, before they read the book they predict what content is inside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read from the Big Book.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrate a story. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group the learners so that the more intelligent ones can be the leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with sounds, and focus on sight words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read to them. "Bana ba a ja".
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use cards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do picture reading with the learners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain new words (vocabulary). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We read together with the learners.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach learners different colours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do picture reading with the learners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the picture walk and allow them to predict what is to follow.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach them to identify the letters in their names. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach learners different colours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have to predict what they think will happen next in the Big Books.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach them to identify the letters in their names. 	

Table 6.2: Learner reading activities, methods and media

LEARNER			
READING ACTIVITIES, METHODS AND MEDIA			
SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C	SCHOOL D
Learner activities	Learner activities	Learner activities	Learner activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write vowels with their eyes closed, in the air, join the dots to complete letters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the Wall Charts and read before daily lessons start in the morning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match the word and the picture.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasting flash cards onto the chalkboard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select words from a box and paste on the chalkboard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on sounds and then learners can identify words which start with the letter that is targeted k. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read after us.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practising the targeted sound by writing it in the air, on the table, on each other's back . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy the words onto their books. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at their names and say which names have for instance the letter k e.g. Kekeletso. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use their names to identify the letters which appear in their names.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play with cards to learn new words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read simple sentences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If they are dealing with animals, then learners can identify those animals whose names begin with the letter t, like in <i>tau</i> (lion). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill in the missing words.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spell correctly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Dictionary to write the words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When they select the correct words from the mixed flash cards and
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill in the missing letters in a word e.g. bona (see). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell a story about the picture of a lion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read from the picture.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the flash cards to teach new words • Mix the words and the learners must pick up the correct words. • Identify words quickly from the many words. • Identify the sound in a word. • Learners who can read help the struggling ones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read in groups while the other group members are pointing at the words from the books

6.2.1.1 Findings emerging from reading activities, methods and media

The following findings emerged from the reading activities, methods and media.

a) Teaching sounds, letters, syllables and words

One of the findings emerging from this aspect is that Grade 1 teachers do assist learners to recognise and identify the Sesotho vowels and consonants when facilitating the development of their reading skills. They also teach in Sesotho the sounds and their corresponding letters (lowercase writing and capital letters), the syllables and how to identify the letters that constitute their names and other words. Two teachers from School B explained how they facilitated the development of letter recognition and identification:

“So ha re bona hore ba tshwere diduma-notshi tseno then re tla be re qala re di kopanya le ... diconsonants. Ke ding? Diduma-mmoho ...?” (showing uncertainty about using the Sesotho words). [When we realise that they have grasped those vowels, we then move on to the consonants ... what do we call them? consonants ...?] (T2BL11).

“Ee, medumo eo ke hore.....ditumanotshi tseo ha re qeta ho ba ruta tsone, ke hore ha re qeta hoba ruta tsone, e re ke re bekeng ena o tla be o ba ruta a, o tla be o ngole a eno le e kgolo A le a e nepahetseng. Ho tloha moo he o ba fa mapage jwaloka ha ba qala ho fihla, ha re ba kenye bukeng immediately. Re ba fa page kapa dibukanyana tsa discribblenyana. Re ba fa tsone he e be neng he ba tla nne ba kopisane a kapa A e kgolo eno e tlilo etsa hore ba utlwisise”. [Yes, with those sounds ... after teaching them vowels, let us say this week you are teaching them the sound a, you will write that a in both small letter and in a capital letter A and show them the correct one. From there you give them pages as they have just come to school for the first time, we don't give them books to write in, rather we give them pages or scribblers. We give them those so that as they copy that a so that they could understand better and end up writing it.] (T2BL15).

As noted above, I observed how the Grade 1 teachers facilitated the development of reading skills. the reading lessons, the first being by one

teacher at School A (T1ALP1). The teacher had thoroughly prepared the lesson and it was well presented since the lesson showed a smooth progression from the introduction, development of the lesson and conclusion with focus on development of phonemic awareness and vocabulary development. She developed her lessons by asking learners questions to maximise learner participation, clearly using the inductive approach. She had also prepared various media to facilitate learners' understanding of the content. The lesson showed succinctly how Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills. A video of the lesson is available on request.

In this lesson the teacher introduced the sound [f] to the learners. She then wrote the letter **f** on the chalkboard so that learners could see the relationship between the sound and the letter. A variety of reading activities and methods were used to foster learner participation in the lesson. She then wrote the vowels **a, e, i, o** and **u** on the chalkboard. She then asked learners to form syllables **fa, fe, fi, fo** and **fu**. She then guided the learners to form words which **begin** with the letter **f** such as: *fofa* (to fly), *fula* (to graze), *fofa* (to get well/queue). Further on, she asked learners to form words which contain the letter **f** like *sefofane* (aeroplane), *lefielo* (broom) and *fereko* (fork). She also encouraged learners to use the words in sentences, such as *Kgomo e a fula* (A cow grazes.).

However, I noticed that the teachers at School A had not yet started using the Big Books and the Small Books to apply some of the reading methodologies in facilitating the development of reading skills.

b) *Telling stories, using pictures and predicting*

The second finding emerging from this aspect was that the Grade 1 teachers applied various strategies and methods to facilitate the development of reading skills. They engaged learners in reading activities, such as telling/narrating stories, using pictures from a book to ask learners questions, reading from the Big Books and allowing learners to predict how the story would develop. They also incorporated a variety of media such as posters, flash cards and wall charts. To some extent, I observed the influence of the *Breakthrough to Literacy*

(BTL) and the *language-experience* approach in how they were facilitating the development of reading skills (Chapter 3:3.2.4) as well as the READ methodologies (Chapter 4:4.5). A teacher from School D responded:

“Re tla ka picture re e bea moo. Wena o a tseba hore na o lebeletse hore bana ba reng. Jwale o bea picture eo hore ba bue ka yona. O tla o entse dikaretenyana tseo, o tla le dicard o botsa ngwana maybe o batla ho ruta ka ngwana, o a bea hore ba bue ka picture eo ha o qeta o tlo ba balla”. [We bring pictures for learners to make something of it. You already know what you expect learners to say about the picture, so you put the picture and prepared cards for them to deliberate and then you read for them.] (T1DL2).

A teacher from School C gave this explanation:

“Re qala pele ka ho ba etsetsa diflash card, re ngola mantswa moo, mme bana ba be ba kgona ho a bitsa. Re ba bontshe hore na a bitswa jwang. Ha re qetile hee re tla nka dibuka, bukeng eo, pele ba e bala ba tlamehile ba bolele hore na ba bona eng, le hore ba predicthe hore na dikahare tsa dibuka ke difeng”. [We start first by giving them flash cards where we write words for learners to read. We show them how to read the words and then take books for the learners to tell us what they see and expect them to predict the contents of the book.] (T1CL2).

The lesson that captured very well how teachers were facilitating the development of reading skills was the one presented by one teacher at School D (T1DLP1). One of the Grade 1 teachers was absent on that day and those who were present had to accommodate her learners in their classrooms.

Although she had approximately 60 learners in her class, she managed to present a very interesting lesson. A summary of all the lessons presented during the in-depth situation analysis are available on request. She used many pictures on the posters to teach her learners about the different seasons and the 12 calendar months. She asked many *why* questions to challenge her learners’ thinking. She facilitated the development of reading skills, focusing on vocabulary development pertinent to weather conditions and seasons of the year as her theme.

She then used the Big Book *Dikarolo tsa Selemo* (Seasons of the year) to apply the strategy of *predicting*. She read aloud to the learners while focusing on correct pronunciation. She encouraged them to read after her. To assess the learners' understanding of the terms she had taught, she asked them to do an activity from the Big Book. They had to match the word *mariha* (winter) with the picture portraying the season winter in the Big Book. In the final activity she requested the learners to select a flash card, read what was written on it then paste it next to the relevant picture on her weather chart. Unfortunately, this activity was not successfully carried out because the learners were very noisy and she could no longer maintain discipline.

c) Using READ methodologies

In their explanation of how they facilitate the development reading skills, the Grade 1 teachers at the four schools gave a hint that they were already using some of the READ methodologies. However, one teacher in School A gave a succinct explanation of how she applies *Shared Reading* in facilitating the development of reading skills in Sesotho:

“Ha re ruta bana ho bala, haholo bana ba Grade e ko tlase, jwalo ka Grade 1, re ka qala ka palenyana e kgutshwanyane, mohlomong re sebedisa Big Book, buka e kgolo, e nang le palenyana le setshwantsho. Re botsa bana hore na ba bona eng moo, ba o bolelle tsohle tseo ba di boneng setshwantshong seo, ebe e le hore o ba ruta ho bala. O a bala, o a bala, o a ba balla, mohlomong ke paragraph e le nngwe. Seratswana se seng le seng seo, ha o qeta ho se bala, o tla bala le bona, ba tla o sala morao, ele ha wena o shebile hore o tlo qala ho ba ruta mantswe a feng. Mohlomong beke e ka nna ya fela o etsa mantswe a moo le diletter tse moo tseo ele hore fela o qadile ka palenyana eo e tswang mo bukeng”. [When we teach learners to read, especially learners in lower Grades like those in Grade 1, we first narrate a short story to them; this story may be extracted from a big book that has pictures. We ask learners to tell us everything that they see on the picture, and then we teach them how to read. You read, read and read to them a paragraph or so. After reading that paragraph, you read it again with them. They will repeat words after you; they will follow you. You will be focusing on the words that you want them to learn first. This might take a week or so still working on words that you want learners

to learn to read and the letters. The teacher would have begun teaching by reading a short story from the book.] (T1AL8).

It also surfaced in the response of the Grade 1 teachers at School C that they were already using the READ methodologies. This teacher made an example of how she uses the theme on animals, which is contained in one of the stories in the Big Books from READ, to develop learners' reading skills:

“Haeba modumo ke [t], e mong o tla re nna ke Thabo, Thabiso, o kile wa bona. Re ntse re ikamahantse ka thuto mohlomong ha re bua ka diphoofole, re re ba re fe diphoofole tseo mabitso a tsona a qalang ka modumo wa [t]’. O tla bolela hore mohlomong ke tau (lion) ke thuhlo (giraffe). [If the sound is [t] learners with names starting with the sound [t] such as Thabo and Thabiso say their names, do you see? Still focusing on the theme of the animals, we also ask them to give names of animals starting with the sound [t] such as tau (lion) and thuhlo (giraffe).] (T2CL20).

The teachers at School C had already begun with the implementation of the Foundations for Learning Campaign (Chapter 4:4.2.3). One of the good lessons, on *Shared Reading*, was presented by a teacher at School C (T2CLP2), who dealt with the theme *Ditholwana tse Sehlopha* (A bowl of fruit).

The video is available on request. These were some of my comments:

- The lesson was well prepared and well presented, showing a smooth integration of phonics, sight words and vocabulary which surfaced as the lesson progressed.
- The teacher made excellent use of media.
- It was excellent how the teacher explained that the word *popo* (pawpaw) was spelled incorrectly in the book and gave the correct spelling, *phopho*.
- The poem, *Nonyana tse hlano* (Five birds), was introduced in the lesson at the appropriate time when the teacher was dealing with the numeral 5.
- The poem was read with passion and facial expressions to indicate different tones of the poem.

- The teacher also demonstrated her ability to help her learners to count, name the fruits, how to focus on the adjective *e monate* (delicious) in an integrated way and to facilitate phonics in a context.
- The only problem that I noticed was that the lesson did not help the learners to link their classroom experience with their real world. For instance, the teacher could have asked the learners which fruits do their parents buy and why do they eat them.
- When it came to the poem, she could have dealt with the emotions experienced at the loss of the fifth bird and linked that with the loss of a family member or a friend.

6.2.1.2 Findings emerging from the materials and policy documents

The DoE, READ Educational Trust and other publishers have developed materials and documents to help teachers understand the improvements in curriculum. These documents also provide guidelines on how teachers can implement those improvements. In the interview I conducted with the Grade 1 teachers I asked them about the documents they used which guided or informed how they facilitated the development of reading skills. In response to this question, I expected them to enumerate the NCS policy documents available in English and in Sesotho, as provided free of charge by the DoE to help them implement the revised curriculum and to acquaint themselves with the improvements effected in the curriculum.

When I had conducted the interviews in the previous year, 2010, the FfLC had already been implemented at all the primary schools to improve the Foundation Phase learners' reading skills. I therefore expected the Grade 1 teachers to be acquainted about the FfLC documents they were supposed to be using in facilitating the development of reading skills (Chapter 5:5.6.3). Unfortunately this was not the case. Below are some of the responses I received from two teachers at School B:

“Ee, ke hore re sebedisa...e re ke re re sebedisa dibuka tse fapaneng jwalokaha ba ntse ba re tlisetsa bo-disample book”. (showing uncertainty) [Yes, we use...let me say we use different books like they bring sample books to us.] (T2BL45).

“Re checka moo disample bookung, re shebe hore na ke eng e bareng re e etse, ebe re sheba se ka re thusang hore re kgone ho fihlella seo o batlang ho se fihlela”. [“We

check the sample books, we look at what they want to achieve, then look at what can help us achieve all that at the end of the lesson.] (T4BL46).

During the second interview at School D, I laboured long enough on this question, rephrasing it several times:

T1 & T2: “*Ke Shared Reading*” (They discuss in a chorus showing uncertainty). [It is *Shared Reading*.] (T1D & T2D L56).

R: “*Ho tloha moo ke difeng hape ditokomane tseo le di sebedisang?* [Besides *Shared Reading*, which other documents do you use?] (RL57).

T1 & T2: “*Re na le di tokomane tse kang Handwriting, Shared Reading*”. [We have documents such as *Handwriting* and *Shared Reading*.] (T1D & T2DL58).

R: “*Le na le di booklet tseo, le eng hape? Ho tloha moo hape le sebedisa eng ho ruta bana ho bala, ho le tataisa hore na le rute bana jwang ho bala?*” [What else besides these booklets do you use to guide you in teaching learners to read?] (RL59).

T1: “*Tse ding ke tsa rona jwalo ka titjhere akere ha re ya rely ho tseo tsa bo-mme bao feela*”. [As teachers we also have our own resources, we don't only rely on the ones provided to us by those women (learning facilitators).] (T1DL60).

T2: “*Ke tsa Department*”. [They are documents from the Department.] (T2DL61).

R: “*Ho na le tse tswang Lefapheng la Thuto? Ke di feng ditokomane tse tswang Lefapheng la Thuto tseo le di sebedisang ho ruta bana ho bala?*” [Do you have any documents from the Department of Education? Which documents do you use from the Department of Education which guide you in developing reading skills?] (RL62).

T3: “*Ke nahana tsona tsona tsa Reading Aloud di hlaha Departmenteng*”. [I think the documents on *Reading Aloud* are provided by the Department.] (T3DL63).

I was expecting the teachers to name some of the following NCS documents:

- *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 Schools POLICY. Languages: English-Home Language (DoE, 2002b);*
- *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 Schools POLICY. Overview (DoE, 2002a);*
- *Tlaleho e Lekotsweng Botjha ya Kharikhulamo ya Naha Bakeng sa Dikereiti R-9. (Dikolong) Leano. Dipuo. Sesotho Puo ya Lapeng/Hae (DoE, 2002c);*

- *Tlaleho e Lekotsweng Botjha ya Kharikhulamo ya Naha. Dihlopha/Dikreiti tsa R-9. Dikolo. Leano. Tjhebokakaretso. Sesotho (DoE, 2002d);*
- *Tlaleho e Lekotsweng Botjha ya Kharikhulamo ya Naha Bakeng sa Dikereiti R-9. (Dikolong). Tataiso ya titjhere tlhahisong ya mananao a ho ithuta. Dipuo (DoE, 2003b); and*
- *Tlaleho e Lekotsweng Botjha ya Kharikhulamo ya Naha Bakeng sa Dikereiti R-9. (Dikolong). Tataiso ya titjhere tlhahisong ya mananeo a ho ithuta. Mophato wa Motheo (DoE, 2003c).*

As they had already been introduced to the FfLC, I was expecting them also to include the following:

- The Foundations for Learning Campaign, *Government Gazette* Number 30880. 2008;
- The National Reading Strategy (DoE. 2008g);
- Teaching reading in the early grades. A teacher's handbook (DoE, 2008i);
- Foundations for Learning Daily Lesson plans for the First, Second, Third and Fourth terms. (DoE, 2008b; c; d; e);
- National Curriculum Statement General Education and Training. Assessment guidelines for Foundation Phase Grades R-3 (DoE, 2008f);
- Foundations for Learning Milestones Checklists: Grade 1. (New Day-by-Day,. 2008); and
- Foundations for Learning. Assessment Framework. Foundation Phase (DoE, 2008a).

However, the teachers' responses above gave an impression that they genuinely did not know about these policy documents from the DoE. The teachers who had them in their possession had not read them, although they had the materials developed by READ Educational Trust, such as *Shared Reading* and the others. In pursuance of the issue on reading materials and policy documents, the teachers acknowledged being in possession of some of the documents, but rarely consulted them. This made me realise that there is a large problem with regard to the accessibility and use of the policy documents. These findings also revealed that there are some gaps that exist between the DoE's intentions for the use of their policy documents and how they were perceived and used by the teachers. The question arises, "How does the

Department of Education ensure that the policy documents serve the purpose they were intended for and whether they are available and used effectively for guiding teachers in facilitating the development of reading skills?" The policy documents written in Sesotho created a greater problem because the teachers did not even know of their availability.

Since these policy documents provide the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for facilitating the development of reading skills, I needed an action plan to make the Grade 1 teachers aware of the significance of the policy documents for their practice. The teachers' workshop in Cycle 1 provided a platform for discussing this issue.

6.2.1.3 Findings emerging from what teachers enjoy

In the interview, I asked the Grade 1 teachers to explain some of the things they enjoyed about their facilitative role in developing learners' reading skills. A teacher from School D gave this response:

"Nna, eo ke e ratang ke hore bana ba tshwarang ka pele ba rata bomistress. Ba ruta ba bang, e ne ba enjoya ntho eo. Ba bala mohlomong katse (cat), ba ruta ba bang hore ntho e qalang ka k e ngolwa jwang. Ha ba thusana ba thaba ke bona ba ba motivated". [Well I like it when the fast learners take the role of being a teacher. If for instance they read the word katse (cat), then they teach the other ones that the initial letter in that word is k and how it is written. They enjoy helping other learners and they become motivated.] (T2DL97).

This response was given by a teacher from School B:

"Ho etsa mosebetsi le ha wena o le siko, ke hore ke yona ntho e nthabisang". [I am happy when learners do their work even if I am not around.] (T4BL69).

One of the teachers in School A responded to the question in this way:

"Nna, ntho eo ke yeng ke bone e nkgahlisa haholo ha ke se ke ba rutila ho bala ke se ke bone hore ba tseba ho bala, ke ha ke ba etsetsa nthwena eo re reng ke dictation. O fumane hore mohlomong hodima mantswa a ten, ngwanenwa o nepile a eight. Pelo ya ka e ya thaba hore kannete, Morena, ke fihletse sepheo sa ka ka ngwanenwa. O tseba ho bala hobane e itse ha ke re palama (ride) a e nepa palama, e itse ha ke re sefofane (aeroplane), a se nepa. Hodima tse ten a fosa tse pedi, ke ikotla mahetleng ke re Morena, ke fihletse sepheo sa ka mona; haholo dictation ke

yona e nthabisang". [What makes me extremely happy is when I have taught learners to read, and when I realise that they can read on their own, I dictate words for them. You may find that out of ten words, a learner gets eight words correctly. My heart gets really happy that Lord I have achieved my objective as this learner can read because when I dictated a word palama (ride) or sefofane (aeroplane), he got it correctly. Out of ten words, he did not write two correctly. I am proud, and I praise the Lord for I have achieved my objective; especially dictation makes me happy.] (T2AL32).

Regardless of the multiplicity of problems that Grade 1 teachers experience in facilitating the development of reading skills, they still enjoy teaching learners to read. The quotations above provide evidence that the teachers actually take pride in their learners' achievements. It is evident that with proper support mechanisms in place, Grade 1 teachers are capable of laying solid foundations in developing learners' reading skills.

The last two aspects, namely the *problems* and the *solutions*, are the major ones and receive detailed discussion in subsequent sections.

6.2.2 Problems encountered in facilitating the development of reading skills

Since my study is aimed at assisting the Grade 1 teachers to improve their facilitative role in the development of reading skills in Sesotho, I had to determine which problems create obstacles for them in performing their facilitative role. The process of determining what problems are pertinent to the Grade 1 teachers' situation was a collaborative effort between those teachers and me. In so doing, I was able to create environments in which Grade 1 teachers could start reflecting on their practice. They also began to think of how they could improve their situation by suggesting possible and feasible solutions to be implemented. I dedicated the first step of data analysis to assigning codes to the teachers' responses on the things they do not like about facilitating the development of reading skills (Chapter 5:5.7.2; 5.7.2.1). I coded their dislikes/irritations as problems. The table below captures the problems that the Grade teachers 1 experience in facilitating the development of reading skills in Sesotho.

Table 6.3: The Grade 1 teachers' problems and solutions for schools A and B

Problems	Solutions	Problems	Solutions
School A	School A	School B	School B
a. Learners whose HL is not Sesotho.	1. We, as teachers, must speak fluent Sesotho and act as role models.	a. We have to group learners, but those learners who cannot read, hide behind those who can read.	1. As we group the learners, we have to guard against discrimination.
b. Not enough reading books.	2. We can share the books amongst ourselves and to schedule reading lessons at different times on the timetable.	b. It is very irritating to change the curriculum every now and then because we are not given enough chance to master the newly implemented curriculum.	2. The DoE must stop changing the curriculum within a very short space of time.
c. No/little exposure to reading from home.	3. We need to understand each learner's situation and help her/him accordingly.	c. It is frustrating when you think about those learners who cannot read. We cannot sleep at night.	3. Try several methods to help such learners.
d. Learners who are ill and have little concentration span.		d. Some learners refuse to read and write.	4. Learners arrive early to revise work done. Those who struggle remain behind after school.
e. Overcrowding in the Class rooms.	4. Few learners must be registered at Grade 1.	e. Learner absenteeism.	5. Parental support desired.
f. Changes in the curriculum.	5. We need enough time to master the new curriculum.	f. Late- coming.	6. Parental support desired.
		g. Reading materials written in English	7. Translation of materials from English to Sesotho
		h. Lack of parental support.	8. Parental support desired.
		i. Sharpening of pencils by teachers.	9. Ask parents to buy quality pencils and sharpeners.
		j. LFs who are English speakers.	

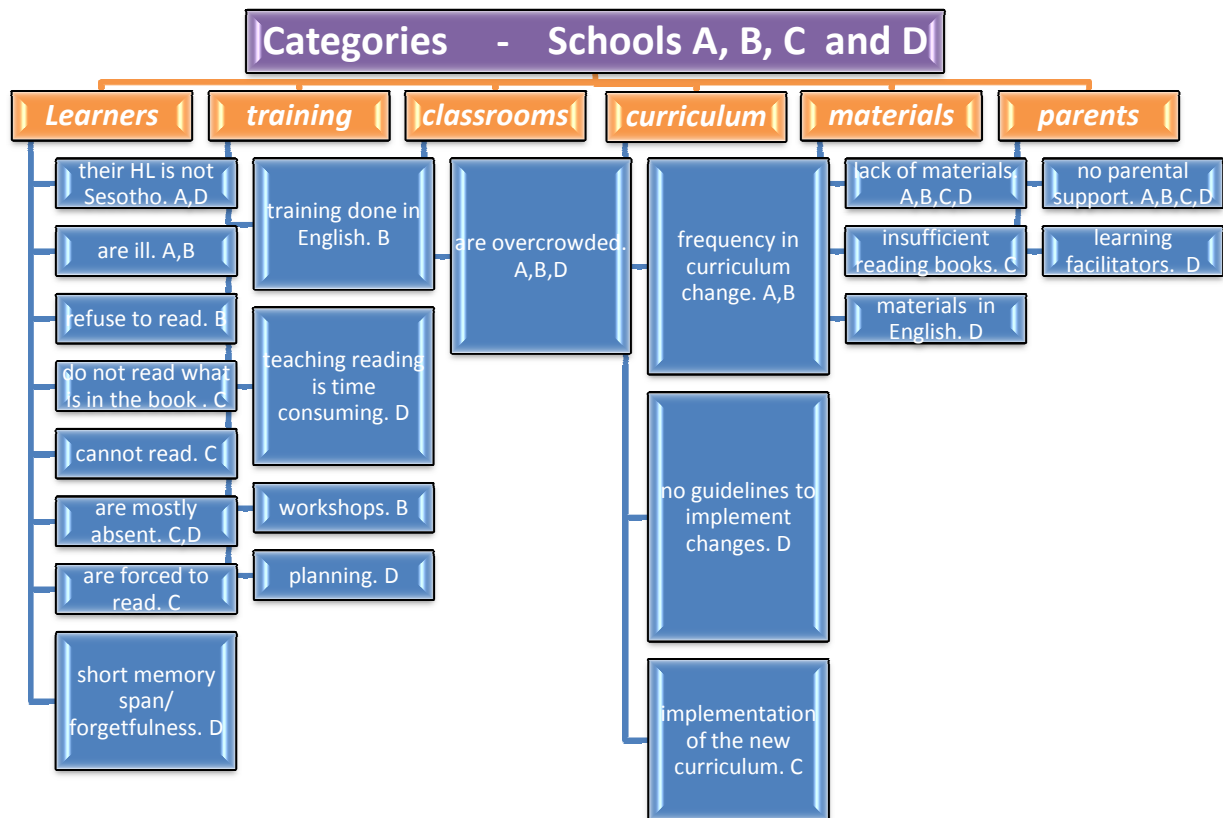
Table 6.4: Grade 1 teachers' problems and solutions for schools C and D

Problems	Solutions	Problems	Solutions
School C	School C	School D	School D
a. When a learner reads what is not written in the book from her /his own head.	1. Extra classes, a few learners remain behind for assistance and individual attention	a. Planning, it takes long hours.	1. Teachers want to be in control and move at own pace.
b. Parents do not encourage children to read at home.	2. We must give learners books to read every day at school.	b. Takes a long time to teach them to read.	2. Reading books must be on learners' developmental level, not too difficult or too easy.
c. We force learners to read, it does not come spontaneously.	3. Integrate reading across the curriculum.	c. Short memory span, they don't remember.	3. Reduce the number of themes to be dealt with.
d. Those who cannot read, disturb the others.	4. Make learners aware that each lesson integrates reading, activities like /ditokiso/ (corrections). Learners must be made aware that it is a reading activity.	d. Learners laugh at other learners and disrupt discipline in the classroom.	
e. Learner absenteeism hampers continuity.	5. Invite parents to come to school	e. There are no clear guidelines.	
f. Lack of parental support.	6. Make learners aware that reading does not end with the reading lessons.	f. Policy documents written in English.	4. Material written in Sesotho, it is time-consuming to translate .
g. Some learners read without understanding.	7. Motivate them with sweets, clap hands, do competitions.	g. There are few reading books.	
	8. At assembly learners can read at to the whole school.	h. Learners whose HL is not Sesotho.	
	9. Make frequent use of the library at the school.	i. Lack of parental support.	
	10. Make frequent use of the library at the school.	j. Learners do not use pure Sesotho	
	11. Invite parents to come to school.		5. Inform Department that workshops must be conducted in Sesotho.
	12. Use easier texts with simple sentences to encourage learners to read.	k. Absenteeism of learners.	
	13. learners remain behind for assistance and individual attention.	Overcrowding in the classrooms.	

6.2.2.1 Establishing categories per school

Having assigned the codes to the phenomena as they presented themselves during the interviews, I then decided to group common problems of each school into categories (Chapter 5:5.7.2.2). Table 6.4 captures the categories from each school.

Table 6.5: Categories of the problems per school



6.2.2.2 Organising sub-categories and categories

The data was further refined into sub-categories and categories emerging from the four schools (Chapter 5:5.7.2.2). Table 6.4 (above) gives a holistic picture of the categories and sub-categories emerging from the data.

6.2.3 Findings emerging from the categories and sub-categories

In the process of establishing sub-categories, I realised common problems experienced by all the selected Grade 1 teachers. However, I also noted that they did not experience the problems in the same way, but rather varying in severity. This was primarily due to the differences that characterised each school context. In this

section, I present the findings in accordance with the categories I established and present some of the solutions provided by the teachers to some of the specific problems they experienced at their schools.

6.2.3.1 Lack of materials

Lack of materials was a common problem amongst the Grade 1 teachers. A teacher from School A summarised the problem as follows:

“Nako e nngwe o a tseba mme, o fumane hore mohlomong tsone dimaterial ka bo tsone ha dienough... O a bona? So o a utlwa hore re tlo sokola taba ya hore ke tla tla ka klaseng ya mme a nkadime buka. Buka e le nngwe re be re fumana hore re e shera re le bararo, o a bona? Ee, a ko nkadime buka yane. Ka nako ena yena o a e sebedisa, le nna ke tlamehile ke e sebedise. O a bona? So, nako e nngwe o fumane re salla-salla moraonyana”. [At times you may find that may be the materials are not enough... do you see? We are going to struggle as I will have to go to another teacher’s class to borrow a book. You will find that the three of us share only one book. You see? Yes... Can I borrow that book? At that moment, the teacher is also using the book and I should also be using it. You see? So, at times we are a little bit behind schedule] (T3AL 39&42).

Although all the teachers from the four schools had a problem with shortage of books, it was one of the teachers at School A, who suggested this solution:

“Hape mme, re ka shera dibuka ene diperiod tsa reading di se ke tsa ba ka nako e iwane mo timetableng”. [Ma’am, we can share the books amongst ourselves and schedule reading lessons at different times on the timetable.] (T1AL60).

The poor quality of pencils that learners used for writing is a sub-category under lack of materials. They did not have pencils, erasers or sharpening devices, although sharpening of pencils preceded every writing activity assigned to them. Sometimes it lasted for the duration of the writing activity, and when they were to start writing they moved around the classroom, borrowing pencils, erasers and sharpeners from their classmates. One of the teachers in School B elaborated on this problem as follows:

“And then ntho e nngwe hape-hape e re diehisang, re na le ho ba loeletsa dipentshela. Ha bana disharpener. Ene e ja nako ntho eno...Ene ba reka dipencil tse cheap ha o so eellwe? Ere ha o re o etsa ntho enngwe, e be e ntse e kgaoha, e ntse

e kgaoha. O tla be o mo etsetsa yone hape. Jo ae e ja nako ntho eo". [One more thing that wastes our time is to sharpen their pencils for them. Haven't you realised that they buy cheap pencils? As you try to do something, it breaks several times. You will have to sharpen that pencil again. That wastes too much time...] (T2BL108-109). The teachers at School B, where the problem of pencils was acute, explained that they bought the pencils with their own money as some parents refused to do so.

"... jwale o a utlwa ha bana ba ba se na dipencil, nna ke tlo fa bana ba bo 15 kapa 20 dipencil, ke tla di bona kae? Ke be ke di reke ka bo-nna. Batswadi ba bone re bua le bone ha selemo se qala every year. Re kopa le rekele bana dipencil. Le ba rekele... please le di tlise sekolong, ba bang ba di reka, ba bang ha ba di reke. Ha ba sa di reka jwalo o ba fa tsa hao. Hakere o dula o e loetsa hobane e ya robaha, ha sekolo se tswa e be e le kananyana. O qeteletse o setjhile wena self o ilo ba rekela dipencil". [... now you can understand that when learners do not have pencils, I will have to give out pencils to about fifteen to twenty learners, where will I get them? I eventually buy them myself. We speak to their parents every year at the beginning of the year. We request them to buy pencils for their children and to please bring them to school. Some parents do buy them, others do not. Those learners whose parents did not buy pencils for them, you give them yours. You sharpen the pencils the whole day because they break, and by the end of the day the pencils are this small (demonstrating with her hand). You end up searching your pockets to buy pencils.] (TBL117).

6.2.3.2 Overcrowding

The findings reveal that classrooms in School A, B and D were overcrowded, expressed in the following way:

"Ee mme, mohlomong e tla ba overcrowded classes. Hakere? Ha class e le overcrowded, ha o ntse o concentratile mole mo grouping ele, ha o tlo fihla kwale ka nako ela..., ene ho na le e le e slow, e tla batlang hore o nke nakonyana ho yone, ha o tlo fihla kwale, nako ele e se e ile. Nako e se e ile ha o ntse o fihlella ba bang bale. Ene le ho... le ho..., ke hore ba lastaga bana ba Grade 1, ba Grade 1 bone ha e eo, ha o no re...ha o no re e be jwalo ka bana ba...ba restless. Ee, tanki, ee o a e bona? Ee, overcrowding le yone e ya counta". [Yes ma'am, it may be overcrowded classes. This is so because as you are concentrating on a certain group, when you get to the

next one after some time..., there is that other one with slow learners who want more time, when you get to a different group, it is time up as you try to explain to other groups. Add with... to ... Note that with Grade 1 learners you will not expect it to be like other...they are restless. Yes, thank you. You see? Overcrowding counts.] (T3AL51).

The teachers from School A suggest that the school must register fewer Grade 1 learners at the beginning of the year to solve the problem of overcrowding. One of the teachers suggested the following solution:

“Nna mme, ke nahana hore ha sekolo se ka fokotsa palo ya bana ba registarang ka January, re tla be re solvile bothata ba overcrowding”. [Personally I feel that if the school can register few Grade 1 learners, .then that would solve the problem of overcrowding.] (T1AL65).

6.2.3.3 Curriculum-related problems

The selected Grade 1 teachers expressed discontentment with the frequent changes effected in the curriculum. A teacher from School B revealed her discontentment in this way:

“O wa tseba, nna ntho e...e...e..., tjhe ha e ne e le hore o wa kgona, ke ho kopana le batho baa ba Lefapha la Thuto ba tlohele ho tjhentjha curriculum selemo le selemo. Ke hore ebile ba a re ferekanya. Sometimes re ferekanngwa ke bona hore o se ke wa fihlella seo o se batlang. Ha o ntse o re o sa etsa ho itseng, ho so thwe ae, tlohelang hona, etsang hona. Ke hopola hore ha hona le selemo se seng se kileng sa fela, selemo se seng se fela ntse re tjhentjha selemo kaofela. Ha o re o sa etsang, time-table le yona e se e tjhentjha. Ho se ho thwe re etsang. Ke hore le wena o qetella o sa tsebe seo o se etsang. Ba tjhiki ha batle, ba tla fumana ntho eo ba e lebeletseng”. [You know what, if you had a chance, you would meet with the officials in the Department of Education and tell them to stop changing the curriculum every year. They play with our emotions. They confuse us so much that you fail to achieve what you want. While you are still busy with something, they would say, no, do not do that, do something else. I don't remember a year that would by without having to deal with changes. Every year we deal with changes. The timetable also changes. They confuse us. Because they are cheeky, they can come and they will get what is coming their way.] (T2BL169).

a) Applying READ methodologies

The implementation of the FfLC was reinforcing the READ methodologies above other methodologies that teachers had used previously, such as *BTL*. Consequently, those teachers who never used the READ programme in the past found it difficult to adapt to its methodologies. A teacher from School D expressed her irritation in having to use the READ methodology:

“Ke tenwa ke yona READ method o ba o sebedisang. Ekare already ngwana o sa ntsa tseba ho bala. Ke hore ha hona moo ba reng re breake mantswe. Ha o ruta ngwana ‘apple’, ha hona moo re break a shebe picture ya apple. Ke hore method wa bona ekare o batla bana ba seng ba le ready for ho bala, ba seng ba tseba ho bala. That is why boholo ba bona bo keremang mantswe akere? [I do not like the READ method because it does not cater for learners who are beginning to read. It does not give us guidelines how to break the words or use pictures in order to make reading easier for the learners. It is the method that would be suitable for learners who are more advanced in their reading and who can do so very well.] (T3DL105).

One of the teachers at School B thought that a solution to the problem arising from frequent curriculum changes was to ignore them. Teacher 2 stated her response:

“... ene o bo ipolella hore o tlo etsa ntho eno eo o e batlang, eo ke bonang hore e kgotsofatsa nna hore ke fihlele bana. Ha ke na ho mamela hore na Lefapha le batla eng hobane ha ba tloha ba re ferekanya ke e nngwe ya...[...then you tell yourself that you are going to do something that you want, something that will satisfy me so that I can reach my learners. I refuse to listen to what the Department of Education dictates because theirs is to confuse us...] (T2BL171).

b) Lack of guidelines

The Grade 1 teachers were overwhelmed by the many changes that had taken place in their teaching practice since 1998. They argued that they had been inadequately prepared to implement those changes because there were no guidelines to support their teaching activities. A teacher from School D stated:

“Ha re na di guidelines tse hlakileng hore o tshwanetse o starte moo. Like hona ha re ba ruta modumo, ha hona hore na o qale kae ka di alphabet. So ha re ba

nepe ka guidelines hantle. Rona ha re na tataiso e ntle hore na ha re qala re etse jwang, wena o le titjhere ke wena o tla bona na o etsa jwang". [We do not have clear guidelines that show you where to start teaching learners to read from alphabets to sounds. It is up to you as the teacher to figure it out. There are no guidelines to lead your way.] (T1DL140).

c) Lesson planning

The problem of lack of clear guidelines was also related to the issue of lesson planning, which teachers experienced as a daunting task. They said that whenever the DoE effected changes in the curriculum they were forced to change the way they plan their lessons. However, it was difficult to do so because there were no guidelines on how they plan a lesson. The quote below reflects how teachers felt about being forced to change the way they did things: " .. *Sometimes re ferekannwa ke bona hore o se ke wa fihlella seo o se batlang. Ha o ntse o re o sa etsa ho itseng, ho so thwe ae, tlohelang hona, etsang hona. Ke hopola hore ha hona le selemo se seng se kileng sa fela, selemo se seng se fela ntse re tjhentjha selemo kaofela. Ha o re o sa etsang, time-table le yona e se e tjhentjha. Ho se ho thwe re etsang. Ke hore le wena o qetella o sa tsebe seo o se etsang*". [They play with our emotions. They confuse us so much that you fail to achieve what you want. While you are still busy with something, they would say, no, do not do that, do something else. I don't remember a year that would go by without having to deal with changes. Every year we deal with changes. The timetable also changes. They confuse us.] (T2BL169).

The teachers were unwilling to provide solutions to the problem of the many changes effected in the curriculum by the DoE, however, one of the teachers at School B suggested the following solution:

"O wa tseba, nna ntho e...e...e..., tjhe ha e ne e le hore o wa kgona, ke ho kopana le batho ba ba Lefapha la Thuto ba tlohele ho tjhentjha curriculum selemo le selemo". [You know what, if you had a chance, you would meet with the officials in the Department of Education and tell them to stop changing the curriculum every year.] (T2BL169).

d) Workshops

The Grade 1 teachers were concerned with the quality of workshops conducted by some of the officials from the DoE, saying that the duration of the workshops was very short and overloaded with information which they found difficult to apply to their teaching. A teacher from School D complained:

“..... di workshop tsa teng di kgutshwane, di na le information e ngata”. [... the duration of the workshops is too short, but loaded with information.] (T2DL167).

It was also frustrating for the teachers to attend workshops conducted primarily in English, allowing for occasional code-switching from English to Sesotho. A teacher from School D explained thus:

“Ba a mixa, nako e nngwe ba etsa ka Sesotho, e nngwe ka English”. [They use code-switching from Sesotho to English.] (T2DL148).

A solution suggested by one of the teachers at School D was as follows:

“ ke hore re ngolle Lefapha ho re at least ba etse di workshop ka puo ya rona”. [We should write to the Department and ask them to conduct future workshops in Sesotho.] (T1DL187).

e) Learning Facilitators

Lack of support from the learning facilitators (LFs) also exacerbated the teachers' situation. During the second interview with the teachers at School D, the issue of was raised. The learning facilitator responsible for Schools C and D was an English-speaking white woman who did not understand Sesotho, so her role as a facilitator at the Foundation Phase created problems in terms of how she communicated with the Grade 1 learners and when she assisted the teachers in the classrooms. The teachers highlighted the problem:

T1: *“Hoba le yena LF eo e ntse e le problem hoba akere ha a tle le ka puo ya rona?”* [Our LF, herself, is still a problem because she does not speak Sesotho.] (T1DL100).

T3: *“Ena LF le ha a tla mona, ha a re fe hore re ruta bana jwang, o re demonstratela ka number ya bana ba few hona le ba bangata ba siyo”*. [When LF visits the school, she does not give clear guidelines on how to teach

reading, she demonstrates by using only few learners when majority is not available.] (T3DL101).

R: “*So bana ba bang ba a tswa ka klaseng?*” [Does it mean some learners have to leave the classroom?] (RL103).

T1: “*Ae, mohlomong a ka nna a re o mo fe bana ba 10 kapa ba 20*”. [No, sometimes she will ask for ten or twenty learners.] (T1DL104).

T2: “*Ha a so ka a tla hore na ha o ruta bana ka klaseng o ba ruta jwang. E ne e tla nne e be bothata hoba o bua English*”. [She has not observed how we teach in class. Even if she comes to observe how we teach, there will still be problems because she speaks only English.] (T2DL105).

An irony of the situation was that the same learning facilitator effectively helped and guided the teachers at School C to master the implementation of the Foundations for Learning Campaign. The Learning facilitator at this school was consistent in monitoring how teachers facilitated the development of reading skills and made frequent follow-ups to check if teachers were applying the READ methodologies correctly in the classrooms. For instance, the teachers at School C were already using *Shared Reading* and had already started with *Group Reading* during the second term of 2010 while the other teachers at Schools A, B and D started in the fourth term with the READ methodology.

When I was invited to observe a Grade 2 reading lesson on *Group Reading*, the same learning facilitator had come to assess the teacher’s performance. However, there were serious problems related to the role of learning facilitators at the schools. The teachers at Schools A, B and D had mentioned in our informal interviews that they saw their learning facilitators only occasionally.

6.2.3.4 Lack of parental support

The Grade 1 teachers were concerned that many parents did not play their role in supporting the learners’ reading development. The majority were uncooperative in helping their children to improve their reading performance, and only a few took the responsibility to monitor and support their children. The Grade 1 teachers did acknowledge that learners came from different backgrounds. Some parents were very helpful, but some were only semi-literate and unable to help with homework.

Some learners lived with their grandparents and others with parents who were ill and cared for by their children. A teacher from School C put the problem in this way:

a) Lack of co-operation

“...ke nahana hore ke hoba bana ba bang malapeng batswadi ha ba badise, o fumana hore le wena o le titjhere le ha o ka mo badisa, o fumana hore thuto eo a e fumaneng e fella mona sekolong. Nako eo o kgutlelang ho yena hape, o fumana hore o ntsana le bothata hobane esale a fella moo o neng o le teng. Ha a kgone ho ka itjhebela hore na a etse jwang. [...I think this is caused by the fact that parents do not assist their children at home. You will find that whatever you have done to help the learner to read, what is done at school is not reinforced at home. By the time you get back to her/him, you find that the child still has the problem. The child is not able to read by herself /himself.] (T1BL56).

The teacher from School D echoed the sentiments:

“Nna ke bona eka ke hore bana ha ba thuswe koo mahaeng a bona, koo matlong a bo bona because re tla be re ba file mosebetsi hore ba bale hae, hosasa ha o ba botsa hore ba ne ba badile hae, ba sa thusweng ba lebetse hore na maobane ba irileng”. [I think it is because some children do not get support from home. We give them homework and those who do not get assisted at home will have forgotten everything that was done in class.] (T1DL89).

b) Parental negligence

Sometimes parents send learners to school who are ill without reporting their condition to the class teacher. It becomes the teacher’s problem when the learner complicates in the classroom and her condition deteriorates, so teachers regard such behaviour as negligence. As one teacher at School B testified:

“Bo bongata wa tseba bolofa, ene ha re fumane le mabaka a hore why ngwana a lofile. O se o tla nno botsa ngwana hore why a ne a le siyo. Motswadi ha a etse boikgathatso. Hape bothata bo bong ba romella bana le ha ba kula, o so tla bona feela ngwana a hlatsa e se e ba bothata ba titjhere”. [Yes a lot of learners absent themselves from school without any valid reasons. You have to

find out from the learners why s/he was absent from school. It is parents who do not want to take the responsibility to ensure that learners are at school every day. Sometimes a parent sends a sick child to school and you become aware when the child start to vomit in class and this becomes the teacher's responsibility to provide the necessary support and care to the child.] (T2DL216).

c) *Some parents perpetuate learner absenteeism*

The Grade 1 teachers believe that some of the problems, such as *absenteeism*, are related to lack of parental support. A teacher from School B explained as follows:

“O a bona o ntse o kgathala matla. Ke oo o a lofa e ne parent ha e repote. Ha o mmotsa, “O no ntso o sa tle sekolong ke eng?” O tlo re, “Ae, ke ne ke dutse feela, mme wa ka o ne a itse ke se ke ka tla sekolong”, kapa “Diphahlo tsa ka di ne di le feile”. O a utlwa ke ntho tse o tenang, tse o dihelang moya. Ke hore nako e nngwe ha o robetse, o ntso ipotsa na ebe bana bale nka ba etsang, nka sebedisa method ofe? Ke hore ntho e ba e etsang, ba discarejuwa ke batswadi. Ba lofisa bana fela-fela moo ho sa hlokahaleng”. [Each day you get discouraged because a learner is absent and his/her parent does not even report that learner's absence. When you ask that learner, “Why were you absent?” S/he would respond in this way, “I just stayed at home, my mother told me not to go to school” or “My clothes were dirty”. Those are irritating and they get you discouraged. When you are asleep, you ask yourself what you could do with those learners, what methods you could use to help learners. Whatever they do, their parents discourage them. They make them to be absent from school unnecessarily.] (T2BL88).

The problem of lack of parental support is daunting for the teachers, who explained that they did everything in their power to invite parents to attend school meetings and involve them in their children' education, but their efforts were in vain. So, it was difficult for the teachers to suggest any tangible solutions to this problem. One said that they would continue to communicate with the parents via the principal's office:

“E ya batswadi ke problem. But batswadi re ya ba bitsa ha batle. Ke few e tlang. Ke nahana re ntse re bo solva ka ofisi. Re ba fa mangolo, ho tla tla ba bana ba tsebang ho bala. Yo sokodisang batswadi bona ha batle ho tla o sa mo batleng. O mong a ba tla but a ba re ha ke tsebe language. O na tlisetsang ngwana moo? A ba re ke sekolo se haufi le moo a dulang teng”. [We write letters to them through the office mainly to target parents of learners with reading problems. The sad part is that only the parents of those learners who are able to read will come. Another parent will come to the meeting and claim that s/he does not understand the language we speak at school. Why did s/he register her/his child at this school? S/he will say that the school is closer to her/his home.] (T1DL185).

6.2.3.5 Teacher-related problems

The Grade 1 teachers work under circumstances that are intellectually, emotionally and physically exhausting.

a) Emotionally challenging circumstances

The circumstances under which the Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills are not conducive to maximising learning in the classrooms, as they are confronted with challenges on a daily basis, such as lack of materials, frequency in curriculum changes and overcrowding in the classrooms, just to mention a few. Some instances evoke feelings of anger, frustration and despair. A teacher in School B expressed her feelings:

“Ha o le titjhere ke hore o a kwata, ha o tsebe o tshwanetse o etseng. Ka nako e nngwe o fihla hae o kgathetse. Ke hore ha o nahana bana bana...ka nako e nngwe ha o kgone le ho robala sentle ha o nahana ngwana a itseng le a itseng le a itseng. Hona jwale tjena ho na le ba babedi ka mane ka klelaseng. Tu tu tu! Ha ba ngole, ha ba bale, ae!! Ke e nngwe ya dintho tse o tenang o ntse o re o etsa mosebetsi. [When you are a teacher you become angry, you do not know what to do. There are times when you get home very tired, all you think about is those learners ... sometimes you do not even sleep well when you think of this learner and that learner. Right now there are two learners who cannot write and

read at all in my classroom. No!! Those are some of the things that irritate us as we try to do our work.] (T4B182).

How teachers facilitate the development of reading skills depends to some extent on the stability of their emotional wellbeing. They were so overburdened with problems that they could not think of ways to improve their emotional wellness. They acknowledged that their role as facilitators in the development of reading skills was a great responsibility, which became unbearable when they had to repeat reading activities. They had to be vigilant to ensure that learners did not memorise sounds/letters, syllables and words frequently used, as explained by a teacher in School D:

“Mara hape bana ba bang ba tseba ho kerama hore o se ke wa mo thola hore o kgona ho bala kapa ha a kgone because o tla ba bala vandag, hosasa ha o se o re a bale nthwane ya maobane a ba sa kgone”. [Some learners are good at memorising which makes it difficult to ascertain if they can read well or not. They can read perfectly well today, but when you ask them to read again the next day, they are not able to do it.] (T2D186).

6.2.3.6 Learner-related problems

The new education dispensation allows parents to register their children at any school within close proximity of the learner’s home, regardless of cultural origins (South African Schools Act, 1996). A new trend, therefore, has emerged whereby learners who use different home languages are enrolled at the same school and accommodated in the same classrooms. This scenario creates problems for those learners who must be taught in Sesotho Home Language, as captured in the following transcript:

a) Learners whose Home Language is not Sesotho

“Ee, mathata a teng. Mathata a rona a ke bonang eka a a re atela ke a hore... eh, re ruta mefuta e fapaneng ya bana ka diklaseng. O tla fumana hore rona mona sekolong re bua Sesotho, ngwana ha bona ka tlung ba buwa Sexhosa, ba buwa Afrikaans. Bothata ba rona ke boo ba hore eh...language eo re e buwang sekolong mona hangata-ngata ha e buuwe ka tlung. Ke mathata a rona ao”. [Yes, there are problems. The problem that is becoming prevalent is that

we teach learners from different cultural groups. You may find that here at school we speak Sesotho, some learners speak Xhosa or Afrikaans at home...Our problem is that eh... the language spoken at school often differs from the one spoken in the family. Those are our problems.] (T2AL37).

One of the teachers at School A suggested the following solution to the problem:

“Rona jwaloka matitjhere re tshwanetse ho bua Sesotho se hantle ka klaseng, ho thusa bana hore ba ithuta ho tswa ho rona puo ya Sesotho e buuwa jwang”.

[We, as teachers, must speak fluent Sesotho and act as role models.] (T1AL59).

b) Learners who do not read what is in the book

Given that reading has similarities with talking, Grade 1 teachers need to encourage their learners to read a text naturally, pausing appropriately with intonation. Grade 1 teachers in this study develop learners’ reading skills by using their fingers to point at each word from left to right. This habit leads learners to imitate their teachers when they read, but at the expense of reading for meaning. The focus was on decoding, whilst fluency was also compromised in the process because the learners did not use their natural voices to read.

In many reading lessons that I observed, learners who could not read let their fingers run through many words in a hurry to get to the last word on that page. Teachers were aware that learners who read like that are often the ones who are not able to read, a problem that frustrates the teachers. A teacher from School C expressed her feelings:

“Ntho tse re tenang ka ho bala ya pele ke ha o bona hore ngwana ha a bale se ngotsweng. O bala feela hobane a tshwanetse ho bala. Ke ka hoo o boneng mme hore ha re ne re etsa Group Reading re tjhentjha hore ngwana e mong le e mong a kgone ho fumana chance ya hae ya hore a bale. Because ha o ba badisa e le klase kaofela ba bang o tla fumana hore ba a bina ba bang ha ba sheba hore na ho balwa kae empa ha o ba badisa ka group ba a consentreita hobane a tseba hore token ha e na ho ya ho yena” [What we don’t like about reading, first of all, is when a child reads something other than what is written and reading just for the sake of reading, not paying attention. That is why

ma'am you noticed that during *Group Reading* we allow learners to take turns so that each learner can get a chance to read. When we do class reading, some learners just make a chorus and others do not even look at what is being read. However, when they do group reading, it helps them to concentrate on the reading. In groups learners are given chances to read and are chosen at random thus ensuring that more attention is paid so that when the chance comes the learner starts reading from where the latter stopped.] (T2CL54).

c) *Learners who are forced to read*

It is evident that some learners had problems that retarded the development of their reading skills. Some did not read what was in the books, while others simply refused to read. It was apparent that these learners needed special attention from the teachers, but this would be difficult for the Grade 1 teachers because there were too many learners in the classrooms. Their plight was highlighted by teachers from C and B respectively:

"Hape hape wa tseba ntho e tenang ke eng? Ke hore bana ha ba thahaselle ho bala. Ke hore re a ba forca hore ba tsebe ho bala. E ne e le ntho empe hore re ba force ho bala". [Again, do you know what other thing annoys me? The learners themselves do not show any interest in reading. We literally force them to read and it is not the right thing to do.] (T2CL57).

"Ba bangata, ha ba batle ho ngola le ho bala ba ya hana. Ke hore ha o re a bale o re; "Ha ke e tsebe ntho eo". Ho kopane le botjhiki o a utlwa a le mokalonyana, a ba feila". [They are too many, they do not want to write and read and they refuse to do so. When you ask a learner to read something s/he would say; 'I do not know how to read that'. They are very young but very cheeky so they fail.] (T4BL85).

The teachers at School B believed that they should never give up on learners who struggle to develop their reading skills. In solving some of the learner-related problems, one of the teachers said:

"Matitjhere a mang a ho tshwana le T2B, ke matitjhere a kgale a nang le experience. O mo traya ka dimethods tseo kaofela ngwana ya jwalo". [Some

teachers like T2B is an old teacher with experience. She uses all the methods on learners who may be struggling to develop their reading skills.] (T3BL133).

d) *Learner absenteeism*

Learner absenteeism was discussed in Chapter 6 (6.2.3.4). When learners are absent from class, teachers are forced to repeat what was covered in their absence, causing them to remain behind schedule. One of the teachers at School C expressed her frustration as follows:

“Today re etsang, ha a yo. The following day le teng ha a yo. O tlo nkgutlisetsa morao hobane ha a tsebe seo re se entseng. Ke tshwanetse ke kgutlele morao hobane jwale a sa tsebe ha a tsebe seo re se entseng”. [Today I am dealing with this aspect, s/he/ is absent. The next day I am treating another aspect, s/he is still absent, Now I have to go backwards because s/he has no ideas of what is happening.] (T2CL80).

The solution to learner absenteeism lies in forming strong partnerships with the parents. However, as indicated above, lack of parental support is a serious problem on its own. The onus still lies with the teachers to motivate their learners to come to school every day, which can be achieved if teachers improve their facilitative role. Learners should feel that they cannot afford to miss a day of school.

6.3 KEY ASPECTS IN FACILITATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS

The process of refining categories and sub-categories culminated in establishing two key aspects, discussed as patterns and themes in chapter 5 (5.7.2.3) as shown in Table 6.5 below. The first aspect relates to creating the teaching and learning environment conducive for facilitating the development of reading skills, and forms the practical component of my study. The second is based on the theoretical foundations of curriculum. The two aspects are important in answering the research question and in determining whether I would achieve the objectives of the study.

Table 6.6: Key aspects in the facilitation of the development of reading skills

ASPECTS					
TEACHING-LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (PRACTICE)					CURRICULUM THEORY
CATEGORY	CATEGORY	CATEGORY	CATEGORY	CATEGORY	CATEGORY
Reading activities	Material/literacy resources	Teacher related factors	Learner related factors	Classroom related factors	Curriculum related factors
<u>SUB CATEGORY</u> -Teaching letters, sounds and syllables by pointing. -Telling stories, using pictures and predicting, -Using READ methodologies	<u>SUB CATEGORY</u> Shortage of: -Reading books, -Writing materials: *pencils, *erasers and *sharpening devices	<u>SUB CATEGORY</u> -Teacher fatigue -Teacher absenteeism -Teachers who do not use Sesotho Home Language	<u>SUB CATEGORY</u> Learners : - are ill, - do not enjoy reading, -refuse to read, -do not read what is in the book, - -do not speak Sesotho HL (some), -have a short memory span -learner absenteeism -learner late coming,	<u>SUB CATEGORY</u> -Too many learners in the classrooms	<u>SUB CATEGORY</u> -Frequency in curriculum changes, -Lack of understanding the concept 'reading', and 'reading processes'. -Policy documents not read. -Too many changes in lesson planning. -few workshops -workshops conducted in English

6.3.1 Teaching and learning environment aspect

The first aspect provides evidence of how Grade 1 teachers facilitated the development of reading skills emanating from interviews and observations of the presentations of reading lessons. In engaging their learners in a variety of reading activities to facilitate the development of reading skills they employed various methods, strategies and media. To some extent the teachers were capable of facilitating the development of reading skills and applying that knowledge in spite of the many challenges they faced, as evident in T1ALP1, T1DLP1 and T2CLP2. Since the settings differ from between schools, the teachers' experiences and achievements in facilitating the development of reading skills also differ. Although some of the best lesson presentations and quotes from the interview transcriptions are from teachers at School A and C (Chapter 6:6.2.1.1 b and c), I do not claim that the teachers from the two schools are perfect. While I acknowledge some positive behaviour demonstrated by Grade 1 teachers at School B and D in facilitating the development of reading skills, the findings reveal an urgent need to provide

assistance to the teachers at Schools B and D so that they can improve on what they are doing.

The point raised here is that the teachers at School B and D (with an exception to teacher T1DLP1) seemed to lack coherence and depth in explaining how they apply the READ methodologies in facilitating the development of their learners' reading skills. The reading activities were still presented in a fragmented way without showing any rigour in helping learners to read with meaning. It was not clear which outcomes the teachers wanted the learners to achieve or how the achievement could be demonstrated by means of assessment standards and the milestones. Logically, I needed a plan of action whereby the Grade 1 teachers and I could come together to formulate clear and well-defined guidelines (Chapter 8:8.3). These guidelines were intended to serve as a frame of reference from which the Grade 1 teachers could coherently and systematically develop phonemic awareness, enhance learners' letter and word recognition, develop their vocabulary, enrich comprehension and foster reading with fluency (Chapter 2:2.2.3). The guidelines would give them confidence to improve the way they facilitate the development of reading skills using READ methodologies and other methodologies that encourage learners' critical and creative thinking and problem-solving.

6.3.1.1 *Accessibility of materials and policy documents*

The problem of accessibility of materials and policy documents impacts negatively on the Grade 1 teachers' facilitative role (Chapter 6:6.2.1.2). Although the materials and the policy documents of the NCS and the FfLC were made available for all the teachers, it emerged from the interviews that the Grade 1 teachers did not have any knowledge of them. It seemed those teachers who had them in their possession did not see the value of using them. The NCS policy documents contain information on the history of the implementation of the NCS, outlining details of the outcomes and assessment standards and how they are formulated for each learning area (Chapter 2:2.3.1; 2.3.2; 2.3.3;2.3.4).

The Grade 1 teachers use Sesotho as Home Language and Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). Since the NCS policy documents were available in Sesotho, these teachers were supposed to have used them extensively, however, they did not

even know of their availability. The Sesotho NCS policy documents are written in rich, academic language which is supposed to improve the teachers' Sesotho usage in developing reading skills. The documents would have helped teachers to bridge the gap between everyday knowledge and school knowledge of the learners.

The FfLC materials did not introduce new content which was foreign to the teachers, but simply reinforced the understanding of the NCS and of the READ methodologies as well their application in facilitating the development of reading skills. The selected Grade 1 teachers did not read these policy documents, hence it was difficult for them to explain how the reading activities they did in class would correspond to the *Learning Outcome 3* (LO 3) and to the Assessment Standards. The teachers did not understand the term *milestones*, as used in the FfLC documents, nor how it related to the learning outcomes and assessment standards. These findings are strongly supported by the results of the pre-intervention test which teachers wrote during the workshop, the findings of which will be discussed in Cycle 1. This scenario necessitated another action plan to improve the situation. The action plan was actualised as the teachers' workshop which was implemented in Cycle 1 (Chapter 7) and planned to enhance their understanding of their facilitative role in developing reading skills. One of its objectives was to create awareness of the use of materials and policy documents.

6.3.1.2 Lack of literacy resources

Lack of materials, specifically reading books, is one of the major problems for the Grade 1 teachers, and it is extremely difficult to facilitate the development of reading skills without reading books. The DoE recommends that each Foundation Phase teacher should have exercise books, learner's books, workbooks and basic stationery, as well as charts, pictures, posters, Big Books and graded readers (DoE, 2008b:15). These resources are supposed to be provided by the schools to make it easy for teachers to perform their facilitative role, however, most schools (Section 20 and 21) do not use the funds allocated for the procurement of LTSM to buy materials necessary for literacy development (DoE, 2009). The shortage of reading books actually denies the Grade learners the right to read from the books. It is a mammoth task for the Grade 1 teachers to help learners to achieve the prescribed assessment standards without reading books. The assessment standards were further refined as

milestones in the FfLC documents (DoE, 2008b:27). The facilitative role of the Grade 1 teachers becomes meaningless if learners are not able to use books to demonstrate the following:

- Use visual cues to make meaning by predicting from the cover of a **book** what the story is all about [my emphasis].
- Role play reading by holding a **book** the right way up and turning pages appropriately [my emphasis].
- Make meaning of written texts by reading a story with the teacher and discussing the main idea [my emphasis].
- Read for information and enjoyment by reading picture **books** and simple captions [my emphasis].

Lack of reading books also impacts negatively on the development of learners' competence in reading for enjoyment, which is allocated thirty minutes per day at Grade 1 in the Foundations for Learning Campaign (Chapter 4:4.2.3). In order to ensure that the Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills in alignment with the prescribed assessment standards and the milestones, another action plan was necessary. My supervisor and I decided to buy the Big Books and the Small Books. Although the solution was short-term, the use of real books helped me to monitor any improvements in the facilitative role of the teachers and in how learners demonstrated the understanding by means of assessment standards and the milestones. The plan was carried out at the beginning of Cycle 1.

6.3.1.3 Writing materials (pencils, erasers and sharpeners)

Although the problem of the use of pencils, erasers and sharpeners seemed insignificant when the teachers mentioned it in the interviews, it became more visible during my interactions with the learners when the teachers assigned writing activities in Cycle 2. In considering that the development of reading skills must be integrated with writing skills, the problem was very serious. The FfLC specifies that Grade 1 learners must spend time everyday doing *Group, Guided and Independent Writing* (Chapter 4:4.2.3), and the Grade 1 teachers encourage learners to use pencils for writing since their handwriting still needs to be perfected. It is also easier to erase work written in pencil than in ink. Teachers also prohibited learners from using

exercise books early in the year to avoid tearing and spoiling the books through repeated erasing, so for each writing activity they handed out pages and took them back after the writing activity was completed. All the written activities were placed in each learner's file. One of the teachers at School B reported:

“Ho tloha moo he o ba fa mapage jwaloka ha ba qala ho fihla, ha re ba kenye bukeng immediately, re ba fa page kapa dibukanyana tsa discribblenyana. Re ba fa tsone he e be neng he ba tla nne ba kopisane a kapa A e kgolo eno e tliho etsa hore ba utlwisise”. [From there you give them pages as they have just come to school for the first time, we do not give them books to write in, rather we give them pages or scribblers. We give them those (pages) so that as they can copy lower case **a** or capital letter **A** so that they could understand better and end up writing it.] (T2BL15).

Since parents buy pencils of cheaper quality they do not last long, and for learners to sharpen the pencils themselves becomes a hobby. The teachers at School B and D decided to take it upon themselves to sharpen the learners' pencils so that they could last longer, and failure to do so implied that they would have to give learners their own pencils or buy them new ones. It seemed to fascinate the learners when I helped their teachers sharpen the pencils during the intervention in Cycle 1. They would then put away the sharpened pencils and search for blunt ones in their bags and bring them to me to be sharpened. Learners were aware that if they did not have pencils they would be exonerated from any writing activities. They were also aware that if they did not have pencils they could roam around in the classroom borrowing pencils from their classmates until the writing activity is over. Lack of erasers also created problems during writing activities as a learner would write something on the page and immediately s/he realised s/he had made a mistake, s/he would then stand up and borrow an eraser from classmates. Alternatively, they would form a queue at the teacher's table to borrow an eraser. Those learners who consistently did not have pencils and erasers became truant, disruptive and caused chaos in the classroom.

This problem also required an action plan, which involved buying pencils, erasers and sharpeners for each Grade 1 teacher. This would minimise the commotion caused by learners borrowing pencils from one another or rushing to a corner to

sharpen the pencils. The plan to buy the pencils, erasers and sharpening devices was carried out in Spiral Cycle 3.

6.3.1.4 *Teacher related problems*

The Grade 1 teachers are supposed to be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to enable them to facilitate the development of reading skills. The knowledge, skills and values are understood better when contextualised within the cognitive (knowledge), affective (values and attitudes) and psychomotor (skills) domains of educational activities. However, it seems as if these teachers were not able to create a healthy balance between the cognitive, emotional and psychomotor level of functioning. There was lack of stimulation and inspiration in how they facilitate the development of their learners' reading skills. This issue was addressed at the workshop in Cycle 1.

In their cognitive level of functioning, Grade 1 teachers need to demonstrate an understanding of what the concept '*reading*' entails (Chapter 2:2.2). They must have a sound knowledge base of the reading processes which take place when they teach learners how to read. These processes include letter and word recognition, comprehension, reaction to and assimilation of the new knowledge from the printed page with the reader's past experience (Chapter 2:2.2.1). The reading processes are closely associated with the NCS critical, developmental and learning outcomes as well as the assessment standards (Chapter 2:2.3), and are related to the FfLC milestones which demonstrate the depth and breadth of achievement of learning as well as the successes learners achieve in learning how to read. The five components of developing reading skills, namely phonemic awareness, word recognition, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension, cover all the aspects of the reading processes which learners must master as they embark on a journey to become fluent and prolific readers (Chapter 2:2.2.3). In addition, Grade 1 teachers need to be conversant with the different reading approaches and methods (Chapter 3:3.2) and reading programmes (Chapter 4:4.2; 4.3; 4.4) which provide a framework in which they can assist learners to become fluent and prolific readers. It is just as important for Grade 1 teachers to demonstrate an understanding of the various reading strategies and skills that can enhance their facilitative role.

In the psychomotor level of functioning, teachers are expected to prepare reading lessons thoroughly and present them in context. They are expected to demonstrate how each reading lesson unit develops from the introductory phase, towards the developmental phase (before reading, during reading, after reading) and rounding off with the concluding phase. They must also showcase the progression of teacher and learners' activities and the application of various reading skills and strategies to maximise learning (Chapter 4:4.6). The more Grade 1 teachers apply a variety of reading strategies and skills according to the learners' diverse needs, interests, background knowledge and their different levels of development, the better their facilitative role becomes. The Grade 1 teachers must also showcase how they use the resources and media in every reading lesson. However, my observations indicated otherwise. The teachers' performance in this regard was still not up to standard, an issue to be addressed at the workshop.

Lastly, the affective level of functioning of the teachers ensured that Grade 1 teachers prepared themselves emotionally to make reading lessons a pleasant and inspiring experience for their learners and themselves. Any love and passion they were to demonstrate when facilitating the development of reading skills would be reciprocated by their learners. In Cycle 1, the issue of the teachers' motivation was addressed at the workshop.

a) *Teacher absenteeism*

Teacher absenteeism emerged as another major factor impacting on the quality of teaching and learning. This problem surfaced when my visits to the schools increased, at the time when I was conducting the in-depth situation analysis. As a result, learners did not receive quality teaching on the days when their teachers were absent. According to *News24; South Africa: News* (2010-01-11) reported, teacher absenteeism had reached alarming proportions and needed to be addressed by the three teachers unions, namely the National Association of Professional Teachers of SA (NAPTOSA), SA Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) and the Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwyserunie (SAOU). However, Grade 1 teachers in my study never acknowledged it as one of problems they had to deal with, and during the interviews none mentioned it as impacting negatively on their facilitative role in developing reading skills. I became aware of the

problem the day I visited School D for lesson observations (20/07/2010) as one of the teachers was absent and her learners were shared equally amongst the other Grade 1 classes. I noticed it again when I played back the recorded interview of School A that took place on the 17/05/2010. The third teacher at the interview was the remedial teacher, not the Grade 1 teacher. During the fourth term I visited School A to make an appointment to observe a lesson, fixed for the following Monday but when I arrived at the school she was absent so we had to reschedule the appointment. On the 31st May 2010 I was invited to observe the Grade 2 lesson on Group Reading at School C, but on arrival I was informed that one of the Grade 1 teachers was absent. On the 19th May 2010 I went to interview teachers at School B but there were only four teachers, the fifth one being absent.

I did not ask the reasons for the teacher absenteeism, which George, Louw and Badenhorst (2008) argue stems from lack of job satisfaction. It has also been linked to low morale and high levels of job stress, amongst other factors (Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) Media brief factsheet 2:2005). In 2011, absenteeism became worse, probably because I would spend the entire week at one school. My observation was limited to Grade 1 teachers, not the entire staff.

I did not have a specific action plan to address teacher absenteeism, but where it stems from job satisfaction it would be worthwhile if teachers could find balance in their practice. The intellectual functioning should be balanced by their emotional and psychomotor functioning, hence, in facilitating the development of learners' reading skills, the balance created between the head, heart and hand should make teachers find meaning in their practice. In the workshop, the teachers were made aware of the interrelatedness of the head, heart and hand. However, the School Management Team of each school, in collaboration with the DoE, still have to create their own action plans to address teacher absenteeism.

b) Teachers who are not Sesotho Home Language speakers

The Grade 1 teachers are supposed to speak Sesotho HL fluently, but this is not the case with some. In their daily conversations with the learners they mix Sesotho with English and Setswana, a proactive I observed when reading from the transcripts of the interviews. A teacher from School B explained how they taught learners to read as follows:

*“Ee, medumo eo ke hore...dituma-notshi tseo ha re qeta ho ba ruta **tsone**, ke hore ha re qeta hoba ruta **tsone**, e re ke re bekeng ena o tla be o ba ruta **a**, o tla be o ngole **a** eno le e kgolo **A** le **a** e nepahetseng. Ho tloha moo he o ba fa **mapage** jwaloka ha ba qala ho fihla, ha re ba kenye bukeng **immediately**. Re ba fa **page** kapa dibukanyana tsa **discribblenyana**. Re ba fa **tsone he e be neng** he ba tla nne ba kopisane **a** kapa **A** e kgolo eno e tlilo etsa hore ba utlwisise”. (T2BL15).*

In the first instance, the teacher is using a Setswana object pronoun *tsone* instead of *tsona* (them), showing an influence of Setswana amongst Sesotho speaking teachers. The second instance shows influence from English as this teacher is using the English word *page* instead of *leqephe* in Sesotho. She goes on to form the plural of that word by attaching the plural prefix *ma-* (Noun Class 6) to the word *page* to have *mapage* instead of *maqephe*. *Maqephe* (pages) is the plural form of the noun *leqephe* (page). She explains that they do not introduce the exercise books to the learners immediately. She does not use the Sesotho words *kapele/hanghang*. She explains further on that they give learners scribblers to practice writing. Once more, she attaches the plural prefix *di-* (Noun class 8) forms the plural noun of the word scribbler and also attaches the diminutive suffix *-nyana* to build the word *discribblenyana*. She could have explained in Sesotho that they give learners *dibukanyana tsa ho kgwaritsa*, a phrase equivalent to *discribblenyana*.

The teachers' sentences are also poorly formulated. For instance, the following sentence is ambiguous, “*Re ba fa **tsone he e be neng** he ba tla nne ba kopisane **a** kapa **A** e kgolo eno e tlilo etsa hore ba utlwisise*”.

There are teachers who speak Setswana as their Home Language, and who mix the two languages with Sesotho because at the schools the LOLT is Sesotho. Although they try very hard to avoid the interference of Setswana when they facilitate the development of reading skills, the words come out spontaneously. Their learners picked up that mixed language and used it when communicating with their teachers. For instance, words and phrases that are frequently used by the Setswana-speaking teachers are as follows:

Table 6.7: Phrases frequently used by teachers who are Setswana mother tongue speaking

	Setswana	Sesotho
Teacher T3B	ntjhupise shutha kashoko tjhwara setjhwantjho shupa	<i>ntshupise</i> (show me) <i>sutha</i> (to shift) <i>kajeno</i> (today) <i>tshwara</i> (to hold) <i>setshwantsho</i> (picture) <i>supa</i> (to point/indicate)
Teacher T4B	l o monyenyane lentswe le le lengwe yo mongwe yena	<i>l e nyenyane / e nnyane</i> (lowercase) <i>lentswe le le leng</i> (another word) <i>e mong yena</i> (another one)

The first set of Setswana words are quoted from the video recording of the reading lesson presented by teacher (T3BLP3). The Setswana set of words are quoted from the reading lesson presented by teacher (T4BLP1). My concern was how effective these teachers were in facilitating the learners' reading skills when the language they used leads to poor formulation of concepts. Once again, it was necessary to have an action plan which would help these teachers to improve their competence in Sesotho. The workshop in Cycle 1 made teachers aware of the value of using Sesotho HL in facilitating the development of reading skills.

6.3.1.5 Learner related problems

The Grade 1 learners are the most important component in facilitating the development of reading skills. When Grade 1 teachers improve their facilitative role,

this improvement must be seen in the way learners improve their reading performance. They should no longer see learners who do not use Sesotho HL as a problem and begin to look at them as a challenge. They need to take into consideration the policy on additive multilingualism in presenting languages to the learners and equip them with the necessary reading skills and strategies to become proficient readers. As the teachers suggested in the interviews, they should speak fluent Sesotho and act as role models.

When the teachers improve their facilitative role they would know what to do with those learners who do not read what is in the book. They would definitely not force them to read because they would understand that learners do not learn to read in the same way or at the same pace. The teachers would therefore know which reading activities match the diverse needs, interests and developmental levels of their learners. In reflecting on this situation, it also necessitated an action plan which would make teachers understand what the concepts 'reading' and 'reading process' mean, which was covered in the workshop.

6.3.1.6 Overcrowding

As discussed in this chapter (6:6.2.3.2), overcrowding in the classrooms impacts negatively on the implementation of the curriculum (DoE, 2009). The average teacher to learner ratio in the state-funded public is supposed to be one to 31.5 (1:31.5), while the ratio at private schools is generally one to 17.5 (1:17.5) (Education in South Africa–South Africa.info, 2011). However, the Grade 1 teachers at Schools A, B and D have approximately 48 learners in a classroom. The Grade 1 teachers at School C have an average of 30 learners in their classroom.

When I was observing how the teachers presented reading lessons, I noticed how difficult it was for them to maintain discipline. Learners became too noisy, spoke in a chorus, stood up and walked around, played and threw things at one another, retarding the lesson progress and learning (School D Observations). As a result, teachers spent too much time trying to maintain discipline and it was a daunting task for them to pay individual attention to those learners who were struggling. Overcrowding is exacerbated by teacher absenteeism (Chapter 6:6.3.46 a), and in a

case where a teacher is absent, her/his learners are shared equally amongst the other Grade 1 classes.

Since overcrowding has a direct bearing on how the Grade 1 teachers facilitated the development of reading skills, an action plan was a necessity. The first part of the plan was to invite the SMT into the Grade 1 classes so that the members could see firsthand what a struggle it was to handle 60 Grade 1 learners. The second part was to engage in the negotiations to facilitate the employment of an extra teacher. However, my plans did not materialise accordingly.

At School D, the HoD of the Foundation Phase was a Grade 1 teacher and one of the participants in the study. When I informed her of my action plan she was not comfortable with it and dissuaded me from inviting the principal to observe how she interacted with her learners.

School B accommodated learners from the squatter settlements in Mangaung. Even before I could discuss my action plan with the Grade 1 teachers, a new primary school was officially opened in a newly developed residential area near the settlements. Many parents requested transfers for their children to be registered at the new school, closer to their homes. The issue of overcrowding solved itself.

Since School A was being renovated and at the beginning of my empirical investigation in 2010, the school would have additional classrooms (Chapter 5: 5.6.2.1), thus solving the problem of overcrowding.

6.3.1.7 *Lack of parental support*

Parental involvement is crucial for integrating learning that takes place at school and at home (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008:126), but this was not case with those parents whose children attended the four schools. The practice of giving learners homework is one of the many ways parents can be involved in their children's education. They can then listen to how their children read at home and motivate them to improve. Nonetheless, lack of parental involvement cannot be a permanent stumbling block in motivating learners to practice reading at home. In the Foundations for Learning Campaign document (DoE, 2008h:14) it is explicitly stated

that parental support is not solely the parents' responsibility. In their absence or unavailability due to work, illness or illiteracy, siblings in the family can take over. All that is needed is to ensure that the home reinforces the learning which has taken place at the school.

I discussed the issue of lack of parental support in Chapter 6 (6.2.3.4). Although it emerged as a category, it is not a priority in my study since it does not directly influence the way teachers facilitate the development of reading skills.

6.3.2 Curriculum aspect

The curriculum aspect concerns itself with the theoretical foundations of the concepts 'curriculum', 'curriculum policies' and 'curriculum change', the teachers' understanding of which seemed vague. As a consequence, they did not see how curriculum policies and curriculum change impact on their facilitative role in developing learners reading skills.

6.3.2.1 Curriculum-related problems

The Grade 1 teachers had expressed concern about the frequency of *curriculum change* (Chapter 6: 6.2.3.3.), as they were frustrated and confused by the frequent changes, a situation which impacted negatively on their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. Although the Grade 1 teachers repeatedly used the term 'curriculum change', it is a misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the improvements that were and are supposed to be strengthening the curriculum. The major curriculum change to take place after 1994 was the implementation of Curriculum 2005 (C2005), in 1998, in all South African schools (Chapter 1:1.1). The implementation brought about many changes in terms of what content to teach, how to teach, how to assess and how to record learners' progress. C2005 came with many policies, guidelines and official documents which teachers had to read and then apply the knowledge entailed in those documents in facilitating the development of language skills (DoE, 2002a:4). Unfortunately, the Grade 1 teachers did not do so because of the uncertainties and confusion that characterised the implementation of C2005 which was reviewed in 2000.

The rationale behind the review of C2005 was not to change the curriculum, but to improve and strengthen its implementation and to make it more user-friendly. The end-product of the review process was the RNCS (DoE, 2002a:6), followed by the implementation of the National Curriculum Statements Grades 10-12 (NCS). However, the new policy documents that accompanied each phase of curriculum improvement and strengthening proved to be burdensome for many teachers. It was a mammoth task for them to read and understand those policy documents and guidelines before they could actually apply the knowledge gained to the teaching practice. The NCS also came with its new policies, guidelines and official documents, including the *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 Schools POLICY. Languages: English-Home Language*, published in 2002 and the *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 Schools POLICY. Overview*. These two English policy documents (Languages and Overview) were published the same year together with the policy documents written in the other official languages.

Although the NCS documents were supposed to strengthen C2005, while reinforcing and deepening the principles of OBE, those documents came with new terminology which replaced the old one in C2005 (DoE, 2002a:5). Consequently, there was a belief that the C2005 documents were redundant. However, I argue that this understanding was a fallacy. The *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 Schools POLICY. Languages* and the *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 Schools POLICY. Overview*, were intended to enlighten the teachers about the core knowledge pertaining to major curriculum change and to cement the teachers' understanding of the rationale behind that change. They also provided a frame of reference in understanding the improvements made and those that would still be made on the current curriculum. This knowledge was crucial in maintaining an understanding of curriculum improvements, but knowledge that the Grade 1 apparently did not have. Such knowledge could have given them a better understanding of the underlying aims and principles underpinning the implementation of CAPS (Chapter 4:4.2.4).

6.3.2.2 Workshops

The Grade 1 teachers' perceptions of the so-called curriculum change were intensified by their having to attend workshops intended to orientate them around the

perceived changes. However, those workshops did not prepare them adequately for the implementation process, often conducted over a very short time, sometimes during school holidays when they were least productive and their minds unreceptive. In addition, the facilitators often used English to explain the information which teachers had to convey to learners in Sesotho. It seemed as if the rationale behind conducting workshops was just to mark them off the LFs' 'to do list,' without ensuring that the teachers understood what was expected of them.

At the workshops they were given policy documents to read in order to acquaint themselves with the information contained therein. They had to learn new content and skills of presenting the new content on their own. The daily timetables changed so as effect these 'changes'. Conducting the workshops prior to the implementation of the curriculum improvements was based on a solid conviction that the curriculum had changed. During the interview I conducted with the Free State Deputy Director for the Foundation Phase on the 17th February 2010, she shed some light on the poor quality of workshops conducted for the teachers, confirming that teachers did not find it worthwhile to attend workshops:

"...because batho ba ha re ba traine hore ba be le understanding because ke hit and run." [...because people say that we do not give them sufficient training so that they gain better understanding because it is hit and run.] (DDL49-50).

She also conceded that the workshops did not assist in empowering teachers because they were given too much information that they did not understand and could not apply in their facilitative role of developing learners' reading skills. This notion is captured in this quote:

"... the aim was to empower matijhere ka dithoto tse kana ka diworkshop, but at the same time matijhere a na a nna disempowered. Neh? Because titjhere ha a le klelaseng yanong o mo learning curve hore kana yanong ke READ, ke hore ke nke Shared Reading, ... Ha a ya kwa, ha a yo ruta, o ilo ira trial and error ya hae. A shebe na nna ke a itse ho ruta ntho tse. O a e bona? [... the aim was to empower teachers through many workshops but at the same time some teachers were disempowered. Neh? This is so because when a teacher is in classroom, it is a learning curve for her/him, now she has to shift to READ, or use Shared Reading...

When she goes back (to the classroom), she is not going to teach, she is busy with trial and error, check whether she knows what she is teaching learners. Do you see that?)] (DDL82-84).

It is against this background that I began to understand the Grade 1 teachers' anguish and frustration with these improvements being imposed on them. My supervisor compared the teachers' situation to a person being forced to take a journey by train into the unknown, only to be left at the station with a ticket and luggage to find her/his own way. Some teachers are still waiting on the platform because they cannot read the destination on their tickets, some have boarded the wrong train and gone missing while others have decided against undertaking the journey and just went home to retire.

6.3.2.3 *Launch of the Foundations for Learning Campaign*

When the Grade 1 teachers were still adapting to the NCS, a new crisis in primary education developed. There were reports that South African learners' reading performance at the Foundation Phase was very poor (Chapter 1:1.1). Consequently, the DoE launched the Provincial Literacy Strategy (PLS), giving each province the flexibility to design its own PLS. In the Free State Province, READ Educational Trust won the tender to implement the PLS, which is based on the philosophy and principles of READ. However, the implementation in 2008 coincided with the launch of the Foundations for Learning in that same year. The FfLC is an intervention strategy and mechanism to improve the facilitation of the development of reading skills at the Foundation Phase. The coincidence of the implementation of the PLS and launch of the FfLC led to confusion amongst the teachers and LFs.

This confusion was confirmed by the Free State Deputy Director for the Foundation Phase during the interview conducted on the 17th February 2010. The purpose of the interview was to obtain her views on the implementation of the FfLC to improve the development of reading skills at the Foundation Phase. She reiterated that the FfLC should not have created confusion amongst the teachers and the LFs since it was based on the READ philosophy and principles, which had already been introduced to them and which also underpin the PLS. According to the Deputy Director she did not anticipate any problems and confusion with regard to the transition from the PLS,

which was still in its pilot stage of implementation, to the FfLC which they had to start implementing. This is how she expressed her views on the prevailing status quo at the time of the interview:

“But the fortunate part was the same methodologies tse di leng mo Provincial Literacy Strategy ke tsone tse di leng mo ho Foundations for Learning. O wa e bona? So as a result, it was easy for us although diLFs (Learning facilitators) le matitjhere ba ne ba re ba nna confused. “Ke READ ka mo, ke Provincial Literacy Strategy ka mo, ke Foundations for Learning ka mo... [But the fortunate part was that the same methodologies that came with the Provincial Literacy Strategy... are one and the same thing as the FfLC. So as a result, it was easy for us to introduce it, although the LFs and teachers found it to be very confusing. They had to deal with READ on one side, Provincial Literacy Strategy on the other, Foundations for Learning again...] (DDL13, 14 & 16).

On the one hand, the Deputy Director seemed not to understand why teachers became confused in terms of implementing the Provincial Literacy Strategy and the FfLC. The underlying factor is that teachers need to equip themselves with the theoretical background of those concepts before they start with the implementation. What further complicated the situation was that the PLS and the FfLC were supposed to be implemented in the same year, without having ensured that teachers adequately understood the complexity of the task at hand and that the teaching and learning environments were conducive to the implementation. Since the teachers lacked the theoretical background, it was not easy for them to do the implementation effectively. On the other hand, she conceded that conducting too many workshops, at inappropriate times, was disempowering to the teachers. She argued that teachers are authorities in their classrooms and should not be told what to do by the Learning Facilitators. The Learning Facilitators must only come in on advisory capacity. She felt it appropriate to lengthen the workshops to empower the teachers instead of listening to the teachers' complaints about their LFs:

“So, ke nahana re lengthene diworkshop so that o be le control over your own class. O manage class ya hao. LF ha e tsena mo classeng ya hao, a o mamele, a se ke a...a... A se ke a o laela. E ne LF e tla listena to a person who is more accountable. Ha re bona hore oo o wa doja, o etsa READ, o tla o bolella hore o etseng. So ke hore ke training but at the same time o tla ba tlohella batho bana hoba ka nako e

nngwe ba nna over dependent ho diofficial. [So, I think we should lengthen our workshops so that they could have control over their own classes. Manage their classes. When an LF enters your classroom, she should listen to you. She should not... not... instruct you. So when the LF enters your classroom, she should listen to you. The LF will only listen to a person who is more accountable. When we see that this one is dodging, she only focuses on READ, the LF will tell you what to do. It is training and at the same time but there are times when the LF just ignores these people because they become over dependent on the officials.] (DDL95-99).

6.3.2.4 Difference between the PLS and the FfLC

At this interview, the Deputy Director of the Foundation Phase briefly explained the difference between the PLS and FfLC, information which should have been communicated to the teachers:

“Ee! Ee! Ene Provincial Literacy Strategy ha e go (o) nehe dispecifics, e o neha methodologies, ha e go (o) nehe dispecifics in terms of what to do, when to, what and for how long. So ena (Foundations for Learning) e strengthna Provincial Literacy Strategy... ha ke bone bothata moo. [Yes! Yes! But Provincial Literacy Strategy does not give specifications, it gives methodologies. It does give you the specifics in terms of what to do, when to, what and for how long. This one (Foundations for Learning Campaign) strengthens the Provincial Literacy Strategy ...I do not foresee any problems there.] (DDL 24-26).

Regardless of the Deputy Director’s explanation, for the Grade 1 teachers, the implementation of the FfLC, once more, meant new content, new teaching methodologies, confusing assessment policies and guidelines, increased administrative burden around assessment and planning, many workshops to attend, different preparations, changes to the timetable and less time for effective teaching and learning (DoE, 2009). In their state, it was very difficult for the teachers to see the interrelatedness between the NCS and the FfLC. Once more, I needed an action plan to ameliorate this situation, this one to make teachers aware of the progression and continuity from C2005 to the NCS and the FfLC.

6.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I examined how the selected Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills for the in-depth situation analysis. The process of determining the sub-categories, categories and themes resulted in new understandings and insights which led to my findings. This process assisted in answering the research question, “How do Grade 1 teachers in some Margaung schools facilitate the development of reading skills under their prevailing circumstances?” I indicated which reading activities the Grade 1 teachers did with their learners, which methodologies, methods, strategies and media they use to help their learners to develop their reading skills. The findings also reveal that despite teachers having to deal with great challenges they still played a significant role in developing their learners’ reading skills. However, in order to improve their facilitative role in the development of reading skills they need assistance in solving some of the problems identified in this chapter.

The next chapter examines my intervention to improve and where possible change the situation. The teachers and I will agree on the guidelines which will serve as a frame of reference in improving the facilitation of the development of reading skills in Cycle 1.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS IN CYCLE 1 OF THE INTERVENTION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In Part 1 of my study, new understandings and insights emerged which revealed the problems experienced by teachers in the facilitation of the development of reading skills. I prioritised the problems and made plans to resolve them. Part 2 thus demonstrates how my intervention provided a framework for resolving the problems in the form of action research cycles.

Chapter 7 presents an exposé of how my intervention was realised by means of a workshop. It illustrates how I presented this workshop for the Grade 1 teachers in order to assist them in improving their facilitative role in the development of reading skills as a foundation for their empowerment. This workshop formed Cycle 1 of the intervention. In this chapter, I also indicate how I gradually involved the teachers, as co-researchers, in the study and how they took ownership of the intervention. It also shows how the teachers and I began to work collaboratively in resolving some of the problems they had identified as obstacles in their facilitative role in developing reading skills. This chapter also elaborates on how the epiphanic moments depict the teachers' improvement as they put the intervention into operation.

7.2 **CYCLE 1: WORKSHOP ON *EMPOWERING TEACHERS: WORKING WITH THE HEAD, HEART AND HAND***

My plan of the workshop premised on the way in which I could assist the selected Grade 1 teachers to improve their understanding of their facilitative role in developing learners' reading skills. Only the teachers from Schools B and D attended the workshop, so I could have few participants in the intervention. The fewer the participants, the better the chances of delving into the problem and obtaining deeper insights into its solution (Chapter 5:5.4.2). The workshop pivoted on the theme: *Empowering Teachers: Working with the head, heart and hand*. In Cycle 1, I

focussed on answering the second research question, “What can the Grade 1 teachers and I do to improve their facilitation of the development of reading skills?” My attempts in assisting the teachers to understand the effectiveness of their facilitative role in developing the learners’ reading skills resulted in the formulation of the following objectives for the workshop, namely to be:

- aware of the progression/continuity from Curriculum 2005 to the National Curriculum Statement and the Foundations for Learning Campaign;
- able to clarify the concept ‘reading’;
- able to demonstrate how Grade 1 learners read;
- aware of the importance of integrating activities from different components in a lesson plan; and
- aware of the interrelatedness of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor factors.

The first two objectives indicated that the focus of the workshop would be on the theoretical knowledge base of how teachers should facilitate the development of the reading skills. The last three objectives showed the importance of creating a teaching-learning environment that would enhance the teachers’ performance in their facilitative role of developing their learners’ reading skills. However, with the teachers’ approval, I rearranged the logical order of the objectives, as stated in the programme during the workshop. The reason was to allow early departure of the Grade 1 learners who participated in the workshop. We swapped session 2 with 3. Session 1 of the motivational speech preceded session 3 on the demonstration of how Grade 1 learners read, followed by session 2 on the discussion of progression/continuity from Curriculum 2005 (C2005) to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the Foundations for Learning Campaign (FfLC). Another change effected to the programme was to link session 1, which covered the item of the motivational speech, to session 6, which dealt with objective 5, namely to make teachers aware of the interrelatedness of the head, heart and hand. The proceedings at the workshop happened in the following order:

- making teachers aware of the interrelatedness of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor factors;
- demonstrating how Grade 1 learners read;

- making teachers aware of the progression/continuity from Curriculum 2005 to the National Curriculum Statement and the Foundations for Learning Campaign;
- clarifying the concept reading; and
- making teachers aware of the importance of integrating activities from different components in a lesson plan.

Figure 7.1 below indicates how Cycle 1 developed through the phases of *planning, acting observing and reflecting*. The phase of *re-planning* led towards the development of Cycle 2.

ACTION RESEARCH INTERVENTION

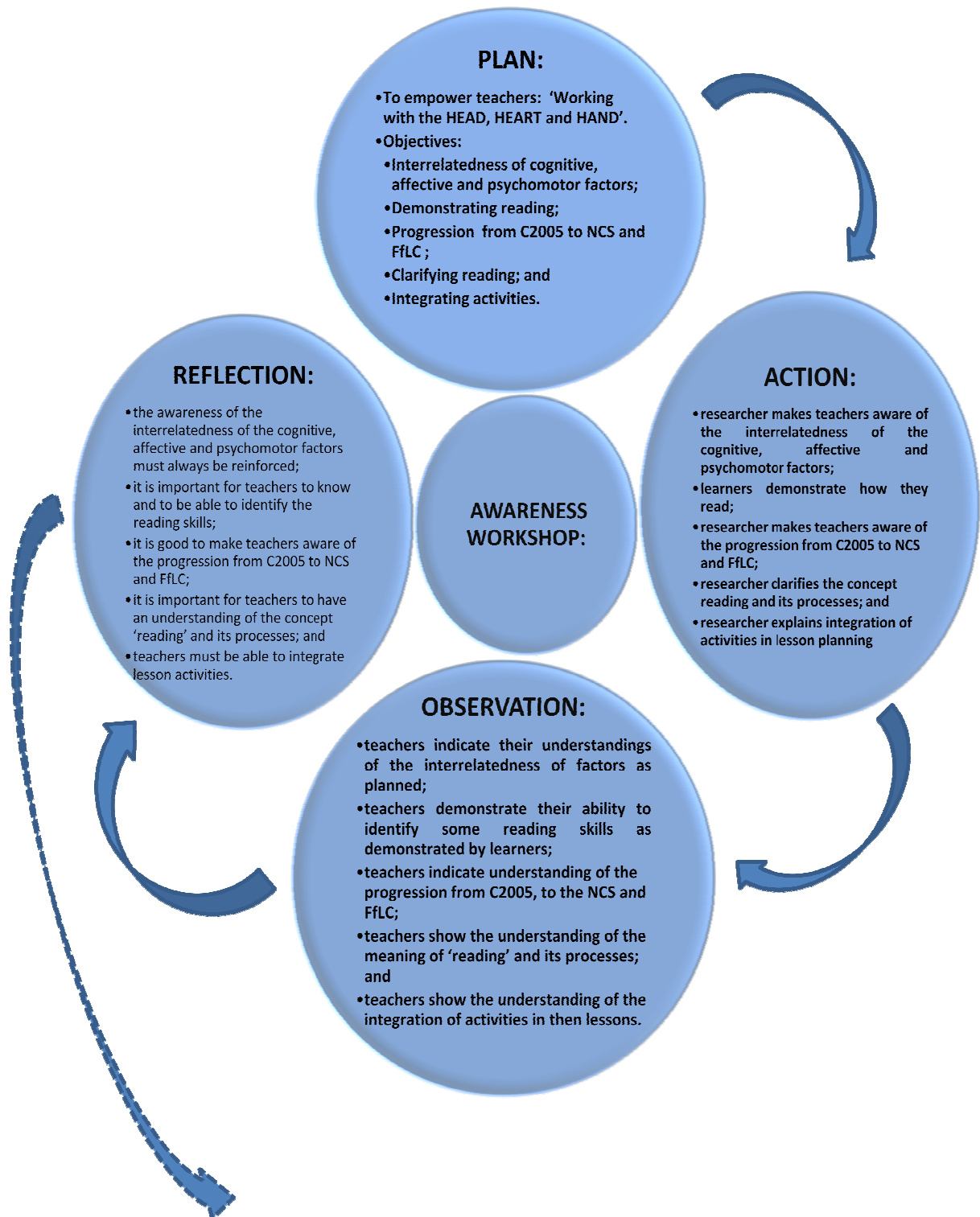


Figure: 7.1 Development of Cycle 1 of the intervention: an awareness workshop

7.2.1 Planning for and conducting the workshop

The *plan* for the teachers' workshop outlined some of the following arrangements made in preparation for the workshop.

- invited the teachers and the School Management Teams so that they could give teachers and the learners permission to attend the workshop (teachers and me);
- set the date and booked the venue for the workshop (teachers and me);
- decided on the theme of the workshop, the aim and objectives (teachers and me);
- designed the programme and decided on the participants; teachers from Schools B and D, six learners from the two schools, the motivational speaker and my supervisor (teachers and me);
- prepared the *PowerPoint* presentation slides (the teachers and me);
- set the *pre-intervention test* (me);
- decided on the designer for the layout of programme and the invitations (the teachers and me);
- made arrangements to have the translators available at the workshop (me and the research assistant);
- appointed a technician to video record the proceedings (me and the research assistant);
- organised a caterer (me and the research assistant); and
- made copies of the different policy documents and handed them out to the teachers for preparation for the workshop (me and the research assistant).

With reference to the last of these, I made copies of the relevant documents mentioned in Chapter 5 and 6 respectively (5.6.3 & 6.2.1.2), and handed them out to the teachers in preparation for the workshop, since they had not previously read them due to lack of motivation. The purpose was to enable the teachers to prepare themselves in advance so that they could make meaningful inputs at the workshop. The teachers who participated in the workshop I labelled as T1D, T2D and T3D from School D. Those teachers from School B, I labelled as T1B, T2B, T3B and T4B.

From School D I gave T1D the READ documents on *Shared Reading, Guided Group Reading* and *Reading Aloud*. She had to prepare a summary of these methodologies, for discussion at the workshop. T3D's task was to prepare an overview of the following NCS documents:

- *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 Schools POLICY. Languages: English-Home Language (DoE, 2002b).*
- *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 Schools POLICY. Overview (DoE, 2002a).*
- *Tlaleho e Lekotsweng Botjha ya Kharikhulamo ya Naha Bakeng sa Dikereiti R-9. (Dikolong) Leano. Dipuo. Sesotho Puo ya Lapeng/Hae (DoE, 2002c).*
- *Tlaleho e Lekotsweng Botjha ya Kharikhulamo ya Naha. Dihlopha/Dikreiti tsa R-9.Dikolo. Leano. Tjhebokakaretso. Sesotho (DoE, 2002d).*

Her brief was to read and understand the concepts *Learning Outcomes, Assessment Standards* in both English and Sesotho and present her summary at the workshop. From School B, I allocated the assignment on reading as follows:

- Teacher T1B had to read the document: *Foundations for Learning: Foundation Phase Literacy Lesson plans. Second term. Grade 1 (DoE, 2008c).*
- Teacher T2B had to read the document: *Foundations for Learning: Foundation Phase Literacy Lesson plans. Third term. Grade 1 (DoE, 2008d).*
- Teacher T3B had to read the document: *Foundations for Learning: Foundation Phase Literacy Lesson plans. Fourth term. Grade 1 (DoE, 2008e).*
- Teacher T4B had to read the document: *Teaching reading in the early grades. A teacher's handbook (DoE, 2008i).*

The *action* in Cycle 1 occurred when the workshop actually took place as scheduled. In order to ensure full participation of the teachers in the workshop and their understanding, I conducted the workshop in Sesotho while the translators whispered the interpretation of the proceedings in English. A discussion on the objectives follows in the subsequent sections.

7.2.2. To make teachers aware of the interrelatedness of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor factors (head, heart and hand)

Session 1 started with the preliminary activities of observing a moment of silence, followed by a word of welcome and introduction of guests. I stated the aim of the workshop then gave the platform to the Discipline Coordinator of Early Childhood Education and Foundation Phase (ECEFP) at the Faculty of Education of the University of the Free State, to deliver the motivational speech. The idea of having a motivational speaker at the workshop came as a request from the teachers in the hope that s/he would boost their levels of motivation and inspire them to accept the challenge to better facilitate the development of reading skills. Since I had informed the teachers about their involvement in the study, they felt that they needed encouragement and inspiration to embark on the journey of improving their practice (Chapter 6:6.3.4.). I therefore invited the discipline co-ordinator, in the Early Childhood Education and Foundation Phase (ECEFP) department in the Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, as a motivational speaker at the workshop.

In her speech, she mentioned that Foundation Phase teachers had an enormous responsibility for the holistic development of their Grade 1 learners, and they had to sign a pledge that children were central in their lives. In the light of the changes that had been taking place in the teaching practice, she urged the teachers not to be vehicles driving the change but rather to take ownership of the process. They should not experience those changes as “disabling” or succumb to “change paralysis” but should strive to inject life into their practice by regarding themselves as founts of knowledge. She related that when working as a Learning Facilitator she had seen how the government gave the teachers the changes to implement, making them the doers, i.e., the vehicles driving them. In the process, their ‘heads’ were informed about what the government wanted them to do, but their ‘hearts’ were not in it because the changes were not *their* goals. Their ‘hands’ were not working because they were neither thinking nor taking ownership of what they were doing as their own. She emphasised that the workshop was therefore going to give them tools to resource themselves so that they could regard the changes as their own.

She read a poem to the teachers motivating them not to give up in the face of failure, arguing that, “success is failure turned inside out”. She mentioned that teachers must

strive to keep a balance between what they think, how they feel and what they have to do, and asserted that they needed to ignite their passion and determination to commit to their career and to their learners. In facilitating the development of learners' reading skills, she urged them to consider teaching themselves how to read. I attach the DVD of the workshop proceedings as Appendix H. Sequence 1 on the DVD contains the full motivational speech.

a) *My **observations** with regard to the interrelatedness between the cognitive, affective and psychomotor factors (head, heart and hand)*

The motivational speech gave an overview of some of the key aspects I earmarked for discussion in session 6 of the programme. It addressed lack of balance between the cognitive, affective and psychomotor levels of functioning of the Grade 1 teachers (Chapter 6:6.3.4). The teachers listened attentively and took some notes. They appeared to have understood the challenge to commit to their profession and continually enrich their knowledge base as a source of motivation.

b) *The **reflective** comments with regard to the interrelatedness of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor factors (head, heart and hand)*

The quotation in **Slide 26** (Kelly & Sewell, 1988) emphasises the need to create a balance between the cognitive, emotional and psychomotor levels of functioning of the teachers. The motivational speech had already offered inspiration and may have triggered determination and dedication in the teachers, who seemed to be more positive. At the end of the workshop, they wrote down their reflections of their experiences of the workshop, grateful that they had attended it and claiming to have learnt much. However, their handwriting was so illegible that it distorted the information they wanted to convey about the workshop. I had to decipher what they actually wanted to say from their reflective comments. Their sentences were poorly constructed; mixing Sesotho and English, hence I did not translate into English lest I distort the original thoughts. The teachers confirmed that before the workshop they were not aware of the interrelatedness between the 'head, heart and hand', which became clear to them as they listened to the motivational speech. One claimed that had they had this knowledge, relating to the interrelatedness

between the cognitive, affective and psychomotor factors, as well as solid understanding of their practice, nothing could have stood in their way. The following reflective comment captures this notion:

“Ke lemohile hore ha re na le tsebo e batsi, re na le kutlwisiso le tjantjello, ha ho letho leo re ka le etsang. HEAD, HEART and HAND”. [I have realised that when we have broad knowledge, when we have understanding and inspiration, nothing can stand in our way. HEAD, HEART and HAND.] (T1B).

The teachers seemed to be motivated and determined to return to their practice and improve the facilitation of the development of reading skills. The quote below confirms their motivation and determination:

“So, ka nnete hona jwale ke utlwa hore ke thabile, mollo wa tuka ele hore ka Mantaha ke tla sebetsa. So, ka nnete ke a kopa hore workshop ena e ke hoja re tswa collegeng. Re ne re tswa re tjhesa, dintho re di etsa hantle ha o le ka klaseng o utlwa o se na letswalo. So, ekare workshop ena eka re thusa hore re be le mafolofolo ano ao re neng re na le ona. Ke utlwa hore le yona Foundations for Learning ke ilo e bala ke e bale step by step ka nnete”. [...So, I really feel happy, a spark is ignited in me, which drives me to go to work on Monday. So, truly my plea with this workshop is to feel like I am new from college. We left the college feeling very enthusiastic and confident to teach. So, my wish is that this workshop can renew our energy. I feel very confident to read the Foundation for Learning, step by step...] (T2B)

The teacher's comment drew attention to the poor quality of workshops presented to them in terms of motivating them in enhancing their practice. T2B expressed her gratitude that this workshop had reignited enthusiasm that was gradually dying in them, the kind they had felt when completing their teacher training at the college. Also surfacing from T2B's comment was that the other workshops, conducted by the Department of Education (DoE), failed to motivate them in the same way this one had. This comment also highlighted the need to keep them motivated in order to enhance their performance in facilitating the development of reading skills.

7.2.3 To demonstrate how Grade 1 learners read

As indicated in 7.2 above, the items on the programme were reshuffled, in session 3 to create a learning environment in which teachers would be aware of the processes that occur when Grade 1 learners were reading, and so be able to identify the skills learners require to master the act of reading. I had requested the Grade 1 teachers to bring six of their learners to participate in the workshop but only three from School D attended. The learners from School B could not attend because they were living too far away from the school.

The teachers prepared the learners to read from books they had brought and which they read quite well, to a round of applause. When they were reading, the participants observed that the learners used their fingers to point at the letters and words, evidence that they could recognise them. However, the act of pointing at every letter or syllable compromised reading with fluency. In the first story, the sound [f] and letter **f** appeared frequently in the text in the word *ferefa* (paint). In the second story, the digraph **hl** appeared several times in the words *fihla* (arrive) and *fehla* (mix). In the third story, the sound [kx] and digraph **kg** was emphasised in the words such as *kgomo* (cow) and *kgolo* (big) during the reading act.

a) *My observations with regard to how Grade 1 learners read*

The learners read fairly well, considering the fact that they were in a strange environment. In order to test their understanding of what they had read, after the reading act, I requested the teachers to ask the learners to retell what the story was all about. When they struggled to give the correct answers, I observed that their teachers gave them some clues, which helped them to answer the questions. The teachers also asked questions such as *Ke mang ya ferefang?* (Who is painting?) and guided the learners to answer the questions by looking at the picture clues. The learners demonstrated the *Assessment Standard (AS)*, which indicated their ability to use illustrations to interpret the meaning of stories and to tell them. This was a positive sign that the teachers, to some extent, were equipping learners with the skills to read for meaning.

Based on the learners' reading act I asked the teachers to explain the reading processes that they observed as the learners were reading. In their responses, they mentioned that the learners were identifying the letters on the pages and that the combination of those letters formed words. Another process identified was that learners were reading from left to right by pointing at the words to associate the sounds they produced with the letters. They also observed punctuation marks because they paused at the end of each sentence. The process that the teachers found difficult to explain was how learners were making meaning from those printed words. I then elaborated that learners make meaning from what they read when they understand the meanings of the words they are reading (Chapter 2:2.2.5). When a learner stops at a word, it indicates that s/he is not able to identify the letters and the words correctly (Chapter 2:2.2.3.1). Another reason was lack of connection of what they were reading with their prior knowledge. I then referred to **Slides 12** and **13** to substantiate this.

Some of the participants asked the teachers to explain why learners used their fingers to point to letters and words, with concern raised that this hampered fluency and encouraged barking at print. They defended the practice, T1D stating that it helped learners to associate the sound and the letter and to follow the sequence of letters that make a word. T2B believed that the learners read very well, considering it was still early in the year, during the second term of 2011. Since they were Grade 1 learners and beginning readers, pointing helped them to read from left to right and to familiarise themselves with how letters were written. TD3 added that pointing helped teachers to identify those learners who could not read because their fingers did not point at the letters they were reading, but let their fingers race ahead. Those learners who had not yet mastered the skill of pointing at letters and words proved to the teachers that they just memorised the words, which were emphasised during *Shared Reading*

What the teachers failed to mention was that using fingers to point at letters and words was actually an AS for Grade R learners to demonstrate their ability to role-play reading. However, the majority of Grade 1 learners did not attend

Grade R and hence the Grade 1 teachers emphasised this AS at Grade 1. The challenge for the Grade 1 teachers was to ensure that learners did not rely too heavily on pointing with their fingers so that they could begin to read fluently. The more fluently they read the better their chances of making meaning of written texts (Chapter 2:2.2.3.4).

The learners' behaviour and posture when they were reading was also under scrutiny at the workshop. The learners' reading behaviour in the NCS is understood within the context of the AS indicating that they role-played reading. Since learners do not have reading books, it is common practice for them to read from the pages. Unfortunately, reading from the pages does not give them practice to hold a book the right way up and to turn pages correctly (Chapter 2:2.3.4.2). Even when they were reading from the books at the workshop, they placed them on the table. The position of the book being slightly skewed, indicating that learners shared the reading books in their classrooms. They had to make space to accommodate the other learner sitting next to them. When they were reading in that position, they had to bow their heads in order to point at the letters. The implication is that the teachers were not able to assist learners to demonstrate the achievement of AS, *role-plays reading*.

b) My *reflective* comments with regard to how Grade 1 learners read

The reading act of the learners served the purpose of linking the theory pertaining to *reading, reading processes* and *reading skills* with practice in terms of the actual demonstration of reading by the learners. This demonstration of how Grade 1 learners read, revealed the teachers' inability to link their reading behaviour with the relevant AS. For instance, when each learner was reading she was able to use her finger to point at letters and words. This was an indication that learners were demonstrating a gradual achievement of AS *role-plays reading, recognises letters and words and makes meaning of written text*. That learners were able to read is evidence that teachers do facilitate the development of reading skills, however, it is not enough for teachers merely to look at the observable behaviour of the reading act without making connections to the theoretical knowledge base of what the concepts mean. The teachers' facial expressions showed their lack of content knowledge

about 'reading' and 'reading processes', which retarded their effectiveness in facilitating the development of reading skills.

Two teachers made the following written comments at the end of the workshop, verifying that they were unaware of the reading processes that took place when the learners were reading:

"I have learnt that reading does not only involve reading aloud by learners, it involves reading with understanding. Learners must be able to assimilate the new knowledge from the printed page. Their prior knowledge was also beneficial to their comprehension. Ba kgona ho kopantsha kapa ho nyalallanya ditlhaku e le ho bopa moelelo ka medumo eo. Ba kgona ho elellwa lentswe le popeho ya teng (word recognition). [They can blend letters to make meaning and be aware of segments that constitute the word.] (T1D).

"Ke ne ke nahana ho ruta ngwana ho bala, o mo ruta feela hore o tshwara buka jwang, o phetla buka jwang empa ke fumane le tse ding tse re lemohisang tlhaku e etsa modumo, ho etsa lentswe. Haholo-holo re se ke ra ba badisa mantswe a mangata ka letsatsi". [I thought that when you teach a learner to read, you just teach her/him how to hold a book and page through a book, but now I have gained more knowledge to help the learner to be aware that a letter makes a sound, to make a word. More importantly, we should not teach many words per day which learners do not understand.] (T1B).

The teachers' comments relayed the notion that their facilitative role of the development of learners' reading skills was still focussed on decoding, which as described in Chapter 2 (2.2.1) constitutes the introductory stages of the reading process associated with acquisition of lower-order skills, also described in Chapter 2 (2.2.4). However, it is important that teachers should focus on developing the learners' reading skills as well as the ability to comprehend the written messages. Their practice of giving learners many words to memorise, without ensuring that they understood their meaning, compromised their ability to comprehend what they were reading from the printed page, or to react and assimilate new knowledge with their experiences. Beyond that, they still had to consider that the reading process is a "cognitive and affective transaction of

constructing meaning which happens simultaneously and in a complementary way” (Chapter 2:2.2.2). It seems as if the Grade 1 teachers need to take cognisance of the notion that, in the act of reading, learners display an interactive process of developing phonemic awareness, word recognition, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension (Chapter 2:2.2.3).

7.2.4 To assist the teachers to be aware of the progression/continuity from C2005 to the NCS and the FfLC

In session 2, the focus of my presentation was on assisting the selected Grade 1 teachers to become aware of the continuity in the formulation of Learning Outcomes, Assessment Standards, curriculum content, methodologies and the teacher’s role from C2005, to the NCS until to the FfLC (**Slides 4, 5, 6 and 7**). Although the formulation of these concepts was different during C2005, the NCS and the FfLC, they appeared consistently throughout these phases of curriculum strengthening and streamlining. Session 2 addressed objective 1 of the workshop. However, this awareness was largely dependent on the teachers’ willingness and motivation to read the policy documents that provide necessary information to help them make meaning of their teaching practice. In making the teachers aware of the importance of reading, the policy documents served as an introductory part to the discussion on objective 1. Since the teachers and I had discussed this part in detail at the workshop, I added it as another aspect of making teachers aware of the progression from C2005, to the NCS and to FfLC.

7.2.4.1 To encourage teachers to read the policy documents

As an integral part of implementing the curriculum, the policy documents contain vital information with regard to latest curricular developments. Some prove that there were no *changes* effected in the curriculum as the teachers alleged. The quotation below in **Slide 9** supports the statement above:

“Curriculum change in post-apartheid South Africa started immediately after the election in 1994 when the National Education and Training Forum began a process of syllabus revision and subject rationalisation. The purpose of this process was mainly to lay solid foundations for a single national core syllabus” (DoE, 2002a:4).

In reading the policy documents, teachers would have kept track of the many improvements and refinements in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and the NCS. **Slide 10** reinforces the understanding that the NCS did not bring forth any new curricular *changes*. The following quotation supports the above statement:

“The revised National Curriculum Statement is thus not a new curriculum but a streamlining and strengthening of C2005. It keeps intact the principles, purposes and thrust of C2005 and affirms the commitment to OBE” (DoE, 2002a:6).

The Government Gazette Number 30880 is another crucial document that teachers had to read in order to implement FfLC. In reading the Gazette, they would have realised that the FfLC did not bring any curriculum changes. They would have also understood that the FfLC is not a curriculum, but an intervention strategy and an enrichment programme for the advancement of Literacy and Numeracy at the Foundation and Intermediate Phases. The rationale behind its implementation was to increase average learner performance in Literacy and Numeracy to no less than 50% after a four year period (Government Gazette Number 30880, 2008:4-5).

At the beginning of session 2, I gave T3D an opportunity to make her presentation based on the policy documents she had to read. In her presentation, she explained that she had learnt about OBE and the ASs. She explained that before they could understand what the concept AS meant, they had to learn about the outcomes. Her answer was very vague, superficial and lacked coherence and depth. When asked to explain what the concept Assessment Standard means in Sesotho, she could not do so. One of the teachers (T1D) spoke on her behalf and explained that they learnt the concepts related to curriculum in English since they did not have the appropriate Sesotho words to explain them. In strengthening their argument, teacher T1D added that they wrote their lesson plans in English, because their Learning Facilitator expected them to do so.

a) *My **observation** with regard to encouraging teachers to read the policy documents*

My main observation in this session was that teachers did not read the policy documents appropriately. Regardless of the fact that I had given them the Sesotho and some English documents to read before our workshop, I realised that T3D did not read them, nor had any of the other teachers. This was an indication that a culture of not reading the policy documents was firmly entrenched amongst the teachers, who asserted that there were too many. However, they could not explain why they did not read the few that I requested them to read. T2B confirmed that they did not read them thoroughly, admitting that she and the other teachers just skimmed through them. If they came across any interesting information, they would decide whether they wanted to make use of it or not. If not, they would simply disregard it and continue with the practices that had worked for them in the past. In supporting T2B, T3B stated that they did not have the time to read the documents and were tired of translating them from English into Sesotho.

The point that I want to raise is that had the teachers taken the initiative to access the Sesotho policy documents, they could have saved themselves precious time that they claim to have wasted on translation. Had they developed a positive attitude towards reading the policy documents, they could have enhanced their facilitative role in developing their learners' reading skills and maintained their positions as experts in their field.

Since the Department of Education (DoE, 2002b:5) recommends that the learner's Home Language (HL) should be used as Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) at the Foundation Phase, the Sesotho policy documents were written to provide information and guidance for the Grade 1 teachers in that regard. The official Sesotho written in those policy documents is very rich in terms of enhancing the teachers' semantic knowledge, graphophonic knowledge (especially vocabulary) and syntactic knowledge. The official Sesotho bridges the gap between the spoken language and the written language, and between specialised school knowledge and non-specialised home knowledge (Hoadley & Jansen, 2002:134). For instance, during the in-

depth situation analysis one of the teachers at School A (T1A) introduced the sound [f] and the corresponding letter **f** as metaphorically represented by the word *ntate* (father). In the sentence *Ntate o reka ngwana* (Father buys a child.), the word *ngwana* (child) is metaphorically represented by the vowels **a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, and **u**. The combination of *ntate* (father) represented by a consonant, and *ngwana* (child), represented by the different vowels, made up a syllable, as indicated in the following examples; **f + a = fa**; **f + e = fe**; **f + i = fi**; **f + o = fo** and **f + u = fu**. According to those teachers, Grade 1 learners would understand better that a combination of a consonant and a vowel form a syllable if they use the words familiar in their cultural background, such as father (consonant) and a vowel (child) form a family (syllable). In specialised school knowledge **f** is *tlhaku* (a letter) known as *tumammoho* (consonant), the vowel **a** is known as *tumanoosi* (vowel) and **fa** is *senoko* (syllable).

The selected Grade 1 teachers became aware of these concepts at the workshop, when they read about them in the Sesotho policy document; *Tlaleho e Lekotsweng Botjha ya Kharikhulamo ya Naha*. Had they made attempts to find out about the Sesotho policy documents and studied them, the Grade 1 teachers would have learnt the key concepts in the implementation of the NCS, such as *diphetho tse hlokolosi* (critical outcomes), *diphetho tsa ho lthuta puo* (learning outcomes) and *maemo a tekolo* (assessment standards). For instance, Learning Outcome (LO) 3 is formulated in this way in Sesotho; *Sephetho sa ho lthuta sa 3: Ho bala le ho boha – “Moithuti o kgona ho bala le ho boha hore a fumane tlhahisoleseding le boithabiso, hape a arabele ka bohlokolosi ho bokgabane ba botjhaba le ba maikutlo ditemeng tsa ho ithuta”*. [Learning Outcome 3: Reading and Viewing: “The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts”].

b) The *reflective* comments with regard to reading of the policy documents

Since the teachers did not know about the Sesotho policy documents, they were more positive and indicated commitment about reading the policy documents. They admitted that in the past they only heard about the *changes* but never read about them. They agreed that when they began to read the

documents and engage in discussions around issues emanating from their readings, they would be giving themselves a good start in understanding their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. A teacher from School B commented that she only heard about curriculum changes from other people but had no idea what had changed and what improved. She also heard about FfLC at the workshops, although they did not help much because they were very short. She wished the workshops were longer and more meaningful so that they could achieve a better understanding and be able to impart the knowledge to the learners. She said that after the empowerment workshop she felt motivated to go and read the policy documents:

“...NCS yona ke ne ke e utlwa ka bo bare hore ho fetohile, hore ho fetohile eng, ho ntjhafaditswe eng, ke ne ke sa tsebe. Foundations for Learning ke ne ke leka-leka hobane re ile ra fumana di-workshop leha e ne e le tsa nakwana, e ne e kare di ka tswellapele hore taba ena e nwelelle kelellong ya ka hore ke kgone ho e isa baneg ka mokgwa o 100%. Ke utlwa ke na le thahasello ya ho e bala ka botlalo le ka kutlwisiso ka thuso ya workshop ena ya hao Mme Mrs Ramabenyane”. [...with NCS I only heard about the changes from other people, but did not have any idea what has changed and has been improved. With Foundations for Learning, I tried because we attended workshops, even though they were short. I wished they could have extended them so that we could understand it better and be able to implement it 100% with our learners.] (T3B).

Teacher **(T2B)** echoed the sentiment about reading the policy documents, maintaining that if someone had explained the policy documents to them, they would have made substantial progress:

“Mme le ditokomane tsena hoja re ile ra fumana motho ya re hlaloesang ka tsona ke a kgolwa re ka be re se mona moo re leng teng. Hape hape ha re tla ho tsena tsa dibuka re a tseba hore na o tshwanetse o rute ngwana ho bala buka jwang empa ka lebaka la ho hloka dibuka, ha re kgone ho ba ruta hore na ha o bala o tlameha o tshware buka jwang o e phetle jwang mme ke utlwa ke le motlotlo haholo. Ke itumella haele mona mme a re o tla etsa follow-up ho ya dikolong ho bona hore na re tswela pele ka seo re ithutileng sona mona workshopong le taba ya hore o tlo reka dibuka”. [Ma’am, I believe that if

someone had explained to us about the documents, we wouldn't be where we are now. Once more, when it comes to teaching reading, we know exactly what we have to do to teach learners to read, but due to shortage of books, we are not able to teach them how to hold a book and how to page through the book. I am happy that the researcher will be making follow-up visits to the schools to see if we are applying the knowledge that we gained here in our classrooms and the promise that she is going to get our learners the reading books.] (T2B).

Since teachers are professionals, they should act professionally at all times. As such, they cannot expect other people, such as the principals, the heads of departments or the learning facilitators to hand out everything to them. As professionals, they need to take initiatives to find out what is new in their profession and what is it that they really need to improve their practice, without waiting for others to do it for them. What emerged from T3B and T2B's comments was that they were perpetuating the syndrome of *learned helplessness*. They expected someone to give them the policy documents, explain to them what information is contained in those documents and show them where to find them. They had created *comfort zones* in which they did not take the initiative to keep abreast of the latest curricular developments in the field of reading. They were aware of the ineffectiveness of the workshops they attended, and the LFs who conducted them, yet they did not take the initiative to read the policy documents themselves.

7.2.4.2 To assist the teachers to be aware of the alignment between COs, LOs, the ASs from C2005 to the NCS and the Milestones in the FfLC

Since C2005 and the NCS pivoted on outcomes, the concepts *Critical Outcome (CO)*, *Developmental Outcome (DO)*, *Learning Outcome (LO)* and the *Assessment Standard (AS)* are fundamental in understanding the NCS. The concept, *Milestones*, became popular with the launch of the FfLC (**Slides 4 and 5**). The *Learning Outcomes (LOs)*, the *Assessment Standards (ASs)* in the NCS and the *Milestones* in the FfLC are interrelated. In order to implement the NCS and the FfLC, the selected Grade 1 teachers needed to be fully conversant with regard to the *what* and *how* of the COs, LOs and the ASs in facilitating the development of reading skills. Due to

their interrelatedness, I could not separate the discussion of these concepts at the workshop.

a) *My observations with regard to the alignment between LOs, ASs and Milestones*

My observation was that the teachers did not understand the meaning of the concepts *LOs*, *ASs* and *Milestones*, as reiterated by them in our discussions at the workshop. Their lack of understanding had a negative impact on their facilitative role in developing the learners' reading skills, which explains why they could not focus on the achievement of *LOs* or the demonstration of the achievement of the *ASs* and the *Milestones*. Their lack of understanding became transparent in their explanation as to how they facilitated the development of phonics and phonemic awareness. In the example above, of a 'father' buying 'children', those teachers would not be able to explain which *LOs*, *ASs* and *Milestones* demonstrate learners' achievement.

Teacher (T2B) explained in the workshop that they facilitated the development of reading skills by introducing the vowels first, followed by the consonants. Later they would allow learners to form syllables and then words. Their explanation regarding how they facilitate the development of reading skills, indicated that they still focussed on decoding and that they still used the *phonic* and *look-and-say* approaches without taking into consideration the learners' prior knowledge, interests, motivation or cultural background (Chapter 3:3.2.2; 3.2.3). In other words, their facilitative role, in a very narrow sense, meant memorisation of letters and words without assisting the learners to attach meaning to the exercise. In such cases, teachers failed to assist learners to demonstrate the ability to use visual cues to make meaning, role-play reading, make meaning of written texts, recognise letters and words and make meaning of written text, develop phonic awareness, and read for information and enjoyment (Chapter 2:2.3.4). If teachers continue to facilitate the development of reading skills as they did before 1997, they would not be able to provide evidence that learners could demonstrate the achievement of the *COs*, *LOs*, *ASs* and the *Milestones*.

b) The *reflective* comments with regard to the alignment between LOs, ASs and Milestones

The teachers expressed their appreciation for gaining new information regarding the interrelatedness between the COs, LOs, ASs and Milestones at the workshop. They were grateful that I presented the workshop in Sesotho which encouraged them to actively participate. One of them confirmed this as follows:

“Workshop ena ke ithutileng ka diphetho, maemo a tekolo, ditlhokolosi, mefuta ya diphetho le dikatleho. Tseo di neng di hlahoswa ka puo eo e seng ya ka ka hoo ho ne ho batla ho ba thata ho nna ho ka di utlwisisa. Ka hoo workshop ena e mputse mahlo, ke tseba ho di arohanya ka puo ya ka. Tse ding ke ne ke di etsa feela ke sa hlokomele hore ho tlameha ho ba le nyalano”. [In this workshop, I have learnt about outcomes, assessment standards, critical, different types of outcomes and milestones. These were previously explained in a language other than my mother tongue, that’s why it was difficult for me to understand. This workshop was an eye-opener for me, I can now differentiate them (outcomes) in my own language. I did some of the things without realising that there has to be alignment.] (T2B).

The issue of the poor quality workshops conducted for the teachers arose again in T2B’s comment. Teachers attested that they had attended many workshops since the implementation of the NCS, which according to them, failed to enhance their understanding of the concepts COs, LOs and ASs either in English or in Sesotho. This resulted in their reluctance to read the documents, preferring to continue with the old practices, which were meaningful to them. In 2011, at the teachers’ empowerment workshop, it was only then that the teachers became aware that there was Sesotho terminology for all the concepts related to the NCS. The concept *diphetho tse hlokolosi* (critical outcomes) and *dikatleho* (milestones) were foreign to the teachers at the workshop. Even when they wrote their comments, they struggled with the correct spelling. For instance, T2B could not spell the concept *diphetho tse hlokolosi* (critical outcomes), instead of *hlokolosi* (critical), she wrote *ditlhokolosi*. The teachers still planned the lessons in English, while they had to present them in Sesotho.

The practice of mixing Sesotho and English words in facilitating the development of reading skills, encouraged learners to acquire that mixed language used by the teachers in the classrooms, compromising the acquisition of Sesotho.

7.2.4.3 To assist teachers to be aware of their facilitative role

The outcomes and assessment standards promote learner-centred and participatory teaching and learning environments (DoE, 2002a:12; Hoadley & Jansen, 2002:121; Jansen & Taylor, 2003:3). It was therefore necessary for the teachers to assume a new role of being a facilitator, in which they were expected to be creative and innovative in interpreting the facilitation of teaching and learning activities (DoE, 2002a:12; Chapter 1:1.6.5). This role did not change from C2005 to the NCS and to the FfLC, however there was a shift of focus in their facilitative role from being in the background in the NCS to returning to the centre in the FfLC. In the FfLC, their facilitative role means more than merely allowing learners to discover things on their own, without proper guidance, while they hovered in the background. They were then expected to take the centre stage in the classroom and to be in control of what learners do and how they do it.

As facilitators, teachers must apply methods that are learner-centred and promote active participation of the learners in their own learning (**Slide 7**). Teachers are responsible for assessing how the learners demonstrate understanding by means of *LOs*, *ASs* and *Milestones*. In their facilitative role, they plan and prepare the lesson units to reflect integration between Listening and Speaking, Reading and Phonics, Handwriting, Writing and Reading for enjoyment as prescribed in the FfLC (Chapter 4:4.2.3). The FfLC strengthened the facilitative role of the teachers by prescribing READ methodologies that encouraged them to be in control when developing the learners reading skills (**Slide 16**).

As facilitators, teachers need to apply learner-oriented methodologies, methods and strategies. They also use group work, discussion, co-operative learning and problem solving to enhance their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. These methods featured throughout 2005, the NCS and in the FfLC (**Slide 7**). In the NCS,

teachers had a choice of presenting the curriculum content to the learners by applying the *Breakthrough to Literacy* and the READ methodologies (Chapter 4: 4.3.4.2 & 4.5), however, in the FfLC, READ methodologies were prescribed by the DoE to improve Foundation Phase learners' reading skills.

a) My observations with regard to the facilitative role of the teachers

It emerged from my observations that the Grade 1 teachers were uncertain of how to perform their facilitative role in developing the learners' reading skills in the NCS. In addition, the shift of focus in their facilitative role from being in the background in the NCS to returning to the centre in the FfLC still seems uncertain (**Slide 19 & 20**). The uncertainty in performing their facilitative role during the implementation of the FfLC was a result of lack of understanding of this role, due to inadequate support and training.

In my interactions with the Grade 1 teachers, I observed how they began to understand their facilitative role in the development of reading skills through their comments. T1D acknowledged that her facilitative role in the development of reading skills cannot be confined to assisting the learners merely to read aloud, but that the process extends far beyond that. She also insisted that the problem in facilitating the development of reading skills lay with them as teachers. She admitted that they never took it upon themselves to find out what happened when a learner was reading and how s/he should hold a book. She also learnt that as a facilitator in the development of reading skills she did not have to give learners a long list of words to memorise and copy into their books. The quote below captures T1D's comments:

"Ntho eo ke e thabetseng haholo ke hore ntho eo ke ithutileng yona ke hore ha se hore ngwana ke ha a balla hodimo a bala jwang. Ntho eo ke ithutileng yona ke hore bothata e ne ntse e le rona matitjhere hobane ntho tse ngata re ne ntse re sa tsotelle hore na ngwana ha a bala a etse jwang, a tshware buka jwang. So e nngwe hape ke ithutile hore ke se ke ka phaella bana ka mosebetsi ke ye le bona butle butle hore ke tle ke fihlele sepheo sa ka". [I am very happy to have learnt that reading is not only about a learner reading out words aloud. It is much more than simply reading aloud. The problem lies with us as teachers

because we are not keen to know what happens when a learner reads and how s/he holds a book when reading. I have also learnt that to reach my aims for the day, I do not necessarily have to give learners too much work but to move at their pace.] (T1D).

b) *The reflective comments with regard to the facilitative role of the teacher*

The Grade 1 teachers were grateful for understanding their facilitative role in the development of reading skills which gives them confidence to assume their role as facilitators. Their new understanding of their role included to avoid giving learners a long list of new words every day, for learners to copy into their books. What is important is for them to ensure that the learners understood the meanings of those words, combine letters and syllables to form words, understand letter-sound relationship or construct own sentences to convey meaning.

Below are some of the aspects of their facilitative role in developing learners reading skills that they learnt at the workshop, and as one testified;

“Ke ithutile hore ke se phahelle barutwana ka mosebetsi o mongata oo qetellong ba iphumane ba ferekane ba sena le yona kutlwisiso ya seo ba se rutilweng. Ke tshwanela ho ba fa mosebetsi o lekaneng o le maemong a dikelello tsa bona. Ke rute butle-butle, e le ho matiella tsebo le kutlwisiso ya bona”. [...I have also learnt that I must not give the learners too much work, which will end up causing confusion rather than understanding. I must give them just enough work at the level of their understanding. I must take it slowly so as to reinforce understanding.] (T2D).

Although the teachers were happy with the information they gained at the workshop pertaining to their facilitative role, it was just a fraction of the total required. Chapter 1 (1.7.5) outlines a description of the teacher’s role as a facilitator, whilst Chapters 2, 3 and 4 provide an overview of the knowledge, skills and values the teachers require in order to facilitate the development of reading skills. They need to understand what the concept reading entails, which readings approaches, strategies and skills are relevant for their facilitative role, and which reading programmes would be most helpful in facilitating the development of reading skills.

7.2.4.4 To assist teachers to be aware of curriculum content

Slide 6 indicates that the three learning programmes, namely, *Literacy*, *Numeracy* and *Life skills* featured consistently in C2005 and the NCS (DoE, 2002a:28; 2002b:3). However, these learning programmes did not specify content, which teachers need to focus on in developing their learners' reading skills. The teachers had the latitude to select the content they wished to include in the learning programmes, which should reflect the learners' diverse needs, interests and background. The Department of Education had hoped that the exercise would encourage flexibility, creativity and originality amongst the designers by providing the teachers with policy documents containing guidelines to help them select content to be included in the learning programmes (DoE, 2002b:2-3; Hoadley & Jansen, 2002:88&120). However, since the teachers interpreted the curriculum differently, learning programmes were different. Contrary to the NCS, the FfLC explicitly states the knowledge, skills and values in the learning programmes, together with the duration for each activity (Government Gazette No. 30880, 2008:9-11). The teachers' handbook for teaching reading (DoE, 2008i) outlines the content to be included in the development of Literacy at the Foundation Phase. In addition, the Big Books and the Small Books contain stories that are organised around specific themes to make it easy for the teachers to select the content.

a) My *observations* with regard to curriculum content

The fact that there was no prescribed content for the Foundation Phase Literacy Learning programme in the NCS was very confusing for the Grade 1 teachers. The only indication given was that the LOs of the Languages Learning Area Statement cover the knowledge and skills to be included as curriculum (DoE, 2002b:6). When I asked the teachers to explain the content they taught the learners in the Literacy learning programme, there was a long silence. It was a clear indication that they were not knowledgeable about the specific content prescribed for Literacy in the NCS, even though they were supposed to have. They still could not design their own learning programmes in spite of the availability of policy documents, which were supposed to guide the teachers in developing their own learning programmes. Unfortunately, neither those policy documents nor the Handbook for teaching reading at the Foundation Phase reached the teachers.

The teachers were also uncertain about which content they were supposed to focus on in developing the learners' reading skills in the *FfLC*, even though they were already implementing it. After another long silence, T1D explained that the implementation of the FfLC introduced as examples the Big Books and the READ methodologies such as *Shared Reading*, *Group Reading* and *Guided Group Reading*. The teachers could not elaborate on the content contained in the READ documents. However, as I probed further about the content in the FfLC documents, eventually the teachers explained that they facilitated the development of sounds, syllables and word recognition within the context of the stories contained in the Big Books.

b) The *reflective* comments with regard to curriculum content

The NCS provided a curriculum framework without prescribing the specific content on literacy development, implying that failure to prescribe the content meant failure to prepare the teachers in facilitating the development of reading skills. Since the teachers did not understand the underlying concepts in the NCS, it was very difficult for them to design the learning programmes. For example, teachers were not aware that in facilitating the development of reading skills they had to focus on phonemic awareness, word recognition, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. They also had a problem with logical order of how to organise the content. However, the FfLC clearly specifies content teachers should use in facilitating the development of reading skills. One of the teachers gave a simplistic explanation of how they facilitated the development of reading skills within the context of FfLC:

"Bana ba ka qala ka ho balelwa story hore o ntshe modumo oo o batlang ho o ruta ka letsatsi leo. Ho tsweng moo ba qale ho e ngola ba be ba bitse mabitso ao a qalang ka modumo oo". (You can start by reading a story to the learners so as to focus on the sound that you want to teach on that day. From there they can write the specific sound and then say the words, which have that sound in them). (T3B)

The implementation of the FfLC was a positive step towards improving and streamlining the NCS. It helped to address the deficit of not prescribing the specific content for the development of reading skills (Chapter 4:4.2.3).

However, having prescribed content in the FfLC partially addressed the facilitation of the development of reading skills. On the fourth and the last year of the implementation of the FfLC, teachers still did not understand the key concepts of the FfLC. The worst part was that some of the FfLC documents contained examples of English phonics. As a result, teachers were still uncertain of how they should facilitate the development of reading skills.

The issue of the ineffective workshops surfaces once more. The few FfLC workshops presented to assist the teachers to facilitate the development of reading skills proved to be ineffective. The teachers claim that the same pattern continues in preparing for the implementation of CAPS. The selected Grade 1 teachers attended a four-day workshop, focussing on one learning programme per day including First Additional Languages (FAL). With this quality of workshops, which are very short, loaded with information and leave no room for teachers to pilot the implementation of CAPS before a nationwide implementation, still remains to be seen how the implementation of CAPS will contribute towards the improvement of the facilitation of the development of reading skills.

7.2.5 To clarify the concepts *reading* and *reading processes*

The discussion on the clarification of the concept 'reading' and the 'reading process' overlapped into how Grade 1 learners read. **Slide 12** describes the concept 'reading' as an interactive, constructive and meaning-based process, which depends upon purpose, background knowledge and the reading task, in which the reader strives towards obtaining comprehension, making interpretations and responding to text in accordance to prior knowledge. **Slide 13** explains the concept 'reading process'. A learner who is able to read can recognise letters and words, comprehend the concepts conveyed by the printed words, react to and assimilate the new knowledge from the printed page based on her/his experiences. The understanding of the concept 'reading process' exemplifies the reading behaviour typical to *Assessment Standards* of the Learning Outcome 3. When teachers involve their learners in activities that require them to identify letters, build syllables and words and do

vocabulary development, this provides evidence that teachers do assist learners to understand the reading process.

a) My *observations* with regard to the clarification of the concepts reading and reading processes

A description of the concept 'reading' at the workshop was just an introduction of this significant concept to the teachers. Chapter 2 is dedicated to unpacking this concept, indicating that there is much teachers need to know about it and other related concepts, such as 'reading processes', 'teaching reading' and 'facilitating the development of reading skills'. From the response below, it seemed as if they were beginning to understand that the reading extends far beyond recognition of letters, syllables and words, but taps into the learner's prior knowledge, interests and cultural background. A teacher from School B explained how she benefitted from the workshops:

"Ha re tla tabeng ena ya reading, tsela eo bana ba balang ka yona ke fumana hore ka nnete rona ha re ba ruta ho bala ha re kgone hore ba late knowledge eo ba tlohang le yona malapeng hoba ke ntho eo re neng re e etsa...so tse buehileng maobane le kasheno ke utlwa ke ahehile haholo hobane picture reading eo re neng re e etsa one o kgona ho idrawela o iketsetse dichart. Jwale ke utlwa hore ha ke fihla sekolong ke ilo etsa ho feta kamoo ke neng ke etsa".

[When it comes to reading, we realise that we no longer give the learners a chance to recall or retrieve from their prior knowledge like we used to so what was discussed today has really empowered me because we did the picture reading earlier by making your own charts. I feel so motivated by the workshop and when I go back to school, I am going harder than what I have been doing]. (T2B).

b) My *reflections* with regard to the clarification of the concepts reading and 'reading processes'

The teachers' theoretical knowledge of the concepts 'reading' and 'reading process' is very superficial, hampering their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. It is, therefore important for them to continuously enhance their theoretical knowledge and thus inform practice.

7.2.6 To make teachers aware of the importance of integrating activities from different components in a lesson plan

This session of the workshop took place on Day 2. I had planned that T4B would lead the discussion by making her presentation based on the document *Teaching reading in the early grades. A teacher's handbook* (DoE, 2008i). Due to time constraints and the teachers' reluctance to read the policy document, I skipped the part on teachers' presentations. The session started by recapturing main ideas from the previous day.

In this session, the objective was to make teachers aware of integrating the *Learning Outcomes, Assessment Standards, Milestones* and reading methodologies in lesson planning. It involved integrating activities from Listening and Speaking, Phonics and Handwriting, Reading and Writing with the *LOs, ASs and Milestones (Slide 14)*. We discussed the integration of these components based on 'Annexure 1: An exemplar of one day's Literacy lesson' (DoE, 2008b:126-127). Since the Literacy lesson in the exemplar was for an English lesson, I made use of the video recording of the lesson presented by **T1DLP1**. Although in the exemplar, English words appear as examples, I tried to give the relevant Sesotho words as examples. In Sesotho, the sound [s] introduces the word *sekolo* (school). Since *sekolo* (school) is a word borrowed from the Afrikaans and English words 'skool' and 'school' respectively, the three words all begin with the same letter **s**.

The word *sister* in Sesotho translates as *ausi*, socks as *dikausu* and *haufinyane* as soon. These Sesotho words would not be appropriate in introducing the sound [s] and the letter **s** in that specific lesson. Nonetheless, there are Sesotho words and phrases that are relevant in introducing the sound [s] and the letter **s**, such as *seeta sa sekolo* (school shoe), *seaparo sa sekolo* (school attire/uniform). Therefore, I decided to make the exemplar relevant to the situation by showing the teachers the excerpts of the video-recorded lesson presentation of teacher (**T1D**) during the in-depth situation analysis.

The most important aspects of lesson planning are firstly to decide on the alignment between the *Learning Outcomes, Assessment Standards and the Milestones (Slide*

14). Secondly, the teacher must decide on the approach s/he wishes to employ (**Slide 15**). Thirdly, the teacher must decide on the methodology (**Slide 16**). Fourthly, the teacher can then decide on which resources s/he intends to use in her/his lesson (**Slide 17**). Fifthly, the teacher is now ready to present the lesson (**Slide 18 -25**). The actualisation of this lesson adheres to the stipulations of the FfLC. The teacher starts the lesson with ORAL work, allowing the learners to talk about special happenings while she and other learners listen. She writes the learner's news on the board (**Slide 18**). In **Slides 19-20**, she links *Shared Reading* to the teaching of Phonics (Chapter 4:4.4.2). T1D in the video also used *Shared Reading* as her methodology. The teacher in the exemplar organised the lesson presentation into Pre-reading, During Reading and After Reading activities to maintain a logical sequence. She also incorporated Handwriting and Writing in her lesson to integrate listening, speaking, reading and handwriting and writing in a meaningful way (**Slides 21-24**). **Slide 25** rounds off the lesson with a reflection.

a) *My **observation** with regard to making teachers aware of the importance of integrating activities from different components in a lesson plan*

An observation I made from this session was that teachers did not prepare their reading lessons thoroughly. They expressed their frustration and anger at lack of consistency in how they should plan their lessons. In previous years they had to change the lesson plan so many times that they no longer had an interest in planning lessons. They maintained that a lesson plan was unnecessary and that writing out a lesson in full was time-consuming. What was most important for them was to know what they were supposed to do with the learners in class. Their Learning Facilitators encouraged them to make a weekly plan, but that was very skeletal and did not cover all the aspects we had discussed at the workshop. Although they claimed that the lesson plan was too long and unnecessary, I explained that it was a culmination of their ability to integrate content, outcomes, assessment standards, milestones, methodologies, methods, resources, teacher and learner activities and the reflective remarks of how the lesson would proceed into a comprehensible plan (**Slides 14-25**). Although the Grade 1 teachers seemed to understand how to integrate all the components of a lesson, they remained uncertain of the importance of lesson plan in facilitating the development of reading skills.

b) My reflections with regard to making teachers aware of the importance of integrating activities from different components in lesson preparation

The fact that teachers were uncertain about the key concepts used in the NCS and the FfLC, due to their reluctance to read the policy documents, explains their apathy in planning lessons. This impacted negatively on the role of learning facilitators in terms of providing appropriate tools for the teachers in that regard and is an impediment to effective facilitation of the development of their learners' reading skills. However, the teachers acknowledged that the workshop was a great benefit towards their empowerment, with one reflecting:

"I have learnt more on the second day of the workshop than on the previous day. I know that I must prepare my lesson by focusing on the following components; learning programmes, critical outcomes, assessment standards and the milestones". (T2D)

One of the guests I invited to the workshop attended in a dual capacity, that of a delegate from the Department of Translation Service and that of my guest. I had invited him and another colleague from the Department of African Languages, at the University of the Free State as language specialists and for their experience in compiling the CAPS documents. They participated actively in the discussions that ensued and made meaningful contributions. In reflecting on the workshop, the former cautioned the teachers about other forces and colleagues who would dampen their enthusiasm in applying the knowledge they acquired at this workshop:

"...Feela ke tshwenyehile ke hore ha re tloha mona re ilo kenya tshebetsong tseo re ithutileng tsona kopanong ena. Feela ke a tseba ha ho na ba bonolo hobane re ilo kopana le batho ba nahanang hore bona ke bo tsebanyane ba tla beng ba re 'wa tseba keng, o tla etsa seo nna ke reng o se etse'. Mme ha le teana le diphephetso tse jwalo, le se ke la tshaba ho bua ka seo le ithutileng ka sona ho mme mona, re se ke ra dumella dintho tseo batho ba bang tlang ka tsona, ditshitiso tsena le ba bolelle hore ha ba re le rute bana mantswe a twenty empa le tseba hore qetellong ya letsatsi hore ngwana a utlwisise, a fihlelle katleho o utlwisise a fihlele katleho o tshwanetse a ithute mantswe a a mabedi feela ka nako". [...However, I am worried that we have to go back and implement what we have learnt from this workshop. But I know that it is not

going to be easy because you will come across people who regard themselves as experts, who will instruct you to do things they may want. When you do come across such challenges, don't be afraid to tell them about what you have learnt from madam here. You must not allow to be told that learners must be taught twenty words at a time, when you know that learners will not understand all of them. Please do what will benefit the child even if it means teaching them two words, which you are sure that they will understand at the end of the lesson.]

The reflective comments of the teachers and other participants who had attended the workshop provided evidence that teachers were gradually becoming aware of their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. Being conscious of their facilitative role laid a strong foundation from which they could plan how to demonstrate improvement in facilitating the development of the learners' reading skills, anticipating that they would take ownership of the process and not just be the vehicles driving the process, as the motivational speaker had stated.

7.3 THE PRE-INTERVENTION TEST

During our discussions at the workshop, I consistently used the concepts *diphetho tsa ho ithuta puo* (learning outcomes), *maemo a tekolo* (assessment standards), *ditlhaku* (letters), *dinoko* (syllables) and *medumo* (sounds). The intention was to role model the use of these concepts in Sesotho to make them sound familiar to the teachers. I used the test as a tool to determine the teachers' knowledge at entry level of the study (Appendix F). The results of the test indicated the teachers' assistance they required in facilitating the development of their learners' reading skills. They teachers wrote the *pre-intervention test* on Day 2 of the workshop.

Question 1 tested the teachers' understanding of curriculum concepts such as *diphetho* (outcomes), *maemo a tekolo* (assessment standards) and *dikatleho* (milestones). In questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 the teachers had to demonstrate understanding of the Sesotho syllable structure and how it differs from the English syllable structure. In question 6, they were expected to give examples of sight words

or words frequently used in Sesotho. For question 7, the teachers needed to explain the significance of prior knowledge when reading. In question 8, they were required to identify the processes that take place when a learner is reading. In question 9, they were asked to explain the influence of the learners' cultural background when reading.

7.4 THE EPIPHANIC MOMENTS

In analysing my interactions with the teachers at the workshop, I was able to identify the epiphanic moments which the selected Grade 1 teachers experienced during Cycle 1 of the intervention as highlighted below.

7.4.1 Curriculum changes

It was an illuminating experience for the teachers to realise that there were no significant changes effected in the curriculum after the implementation of C2005 in 1998. They understood that the perceived changes were actually refinements and improvements of the different phases of the curriculum. It changed their perspective and for the first time they were motivated to accommodate the improvements in their practice:

“E nna workshop ho tloha maobane ho fihlela kasheno e nthusitse hobane ke fumane hore moo ke neng ke tsamaya ke teneha, ka tlhaloso tseo o re fileng tsona ke utlwile ke ahehile hobane tse ding tsa dintho ha ke se ntse ke di sheba jwalo ka ha re ne re ntse re bua ka di changes, ke fumane hore hakaalo ha se dichanges ke taba ya hore feela ya hore mohlomong re be re hloka yona tlhaloetso ya hore na dintho tsena di nyalana jwang ha se hore di a tjhentjha. Nna ke fumane hore ka nnete ke thusehile haholo le hore dintho tse ding tseo mme a ntseng a di bua ke dintho tseo ke ntseng ke kgona ho di etsa. Ke ka baka la terminology ke yona e neng e etsa hore e ke dintho tsena di ntjha”. [Yes, personally from yesterday until today this workshop has helped me a lot because where I felt discouraged, through your explanations, I feel empowered by the information provided to us. It has made me realise that most of the changes we have discussed are not necessarily new, we just needed guidance to see the interrelatedness between the different phases of the curriculum. The terminology used in different phases of the curriculum made us

believe that things were changing from time to time, which was confusing for us. The workshop helped us make sense of the progression from one curriculum to the other. Most of the things discussed here is what we are doing in the classrooms. The difference lies in the terminology used which made us believe that there were some changes.] (T1B).

When teachers went for the CAPS workshops, it was with a sense of accomplishment to note that their earlier negativity about curriculum change is negligible and teachers no longer perceived it as a huge problem. This was an indication of a change in their knowledge, skills, attitudes and values as professionals. They attended the workshops with the anticipation of acquiring more information about CAPS and how its implementation would strengthen their facilitative role in the development of reading skills.

7.4.2 Policy documents

The significance of reading the policy documents was an illuminating experience for the teachers. Consequently, their perception about them changed for the better, increasing their motivation to begin to read them and understanding of the value of reading them. In so doing, they would increase their knowledge of the curriculum and would be in a better position to implement it:

“Because ntho eo nna ke neng ke e etsa tabeng ya ditokomane tse tsa ntho, ke ne ke le botswa ho di bala because ke ne ke bona di le bofive jwalo. So, ke iphile nako ya ho di bala. So ke bone hore ke ne ke shebile botenya boo ba tsona athe ha hona letho moo e bile ke bone hore dintho tse kamoo ke tseo motho o ntseng o di tseba. So, nna ke thabile ka nnete ka information ena.” [What I used to do regarding the documents, I was lazy to read them because they were too many, about five in numbers and thick. But now I actually decided to read the documents and to my surprise, most information contained in the policy documents is not new, some of the things are what we do in our daily work. I am really happy about the information provided to us.] (T1D).

Another epiphanic moment with regard to the policy documents was the realisation of the availability of those in Sesotho. Since they used Sesotho as the LoLT, the

information contained in the latter would have enhanced their knowledge of the curriculum while their language competence regarding the use of relevant terminology used in the curriculum would have increase substantially. One of the teachers commented about the Sesotho policy in this quote:

“Ke a leboha mme. Nna ka nnete workshop ena ho tloha maobane ke bone katileho le thuso e kgolo haholoholo bukeng tse tsa Sesotho tseo re ntseng re sa tsebe hore di teng, re ntse re sokola ka ho translator”. [Thank you, madam. Personally, with this workshop, since yesterday, I have achieved a lot more especially I have learnt that the policy documents are available in Sesotho after struggling for so long with translating.] (T3B)

7.4.3 Workshop conducted in Sesotho

Conducting the workshop in Sesotho was another epiphanic moment for the teachers. It was easy for them to understand the information presented at the workshop and to participate meaningfully in the discussions. It was an achievement to realise that the teachers actually took pride in using Sesotho; another indication of a change in their professional development.

“Workshop ena ke ithutileng ka diphetho, maemo a tekolo, ditlhokolosi, mefuta ya diphetho le dikatileho, tseo di neng di hlalose ka puo eo e seng ya ka ka hoo ho ne ho batla ho ba thata ho nna ho ka di utlwisisa. Ka hoo workshop ena e mputse mahlo, ke tseba ho di arohanya ka puo ya ka.” [The workshop I learnt about the types of outcomes, assessment standards and the milestones, which were earlier on explained in a foreign language, hence it was difficult for me to understand. As a result, this workshop was an eye-opener, for I can differentiate the concepts in my own language (Sesotho).] (T2D).

7.4.4 Reading strategies

For some of the teachers it was an illuminating experience to be aware of effective use of reading strategies. They became aware of the significance of using strategies such as *predicting*, *doing a picture walk* with the learners as well as the application of *questioning technique* in developing the learners' reading skills. Another indication of

a change in their professional development as a result of their involvement in the study.

“Ke ithutile hore ha o ruta ngwana ho bala o kgona ho thusa ngwana ha o ntso mo botsa dipotso hore na ho etsahalang. Dipotso tsena di etsa hore ngwana a kgone ho nahana, a iketsetse, a inahanele ka bo yena”. [I learnt that when you develop the learners reading skills you can do that effectively if you ask questions. The questions help the learners to think, to do things her/himself and to think independently.] (T3B).

7.4.5 Lesson plan

The discussions on lesson plan and preparation developed into an epiphanic moment for the teachers as they realised that effectiveness in their facilitative role in developing the learners’ reading skills depended on thorough preparation and planning. It was also significant for them to realise the importance of integrating the different components of the lesson in their lesson plan:

“Ke utlwisisitse hore molemo wa ho nyalana mesebetsi e fapafapaneng ya thuto e bohlokwa ha kakang tlhophisong ya ho itokisetsa ho ya etsa mesebetsi wa ka wa letsatsi le leng le le leng. Ke ikemiseditse ho hlophisa mesebetsi wa ka ka manontlhotlo”. [I understood the advantages of integrating the different components of the lesson, how important it is in preparing oneself for my work on a daily basis. I am prepared to plan my work diligently]. (T1D)

7.4.6 Developing phonemic awareness

The teachers were unaware of the sequence of developing the learners’ phonic and phonemic awareness. However, this realisation at our workshop resulted in one of the epiphanic moments:

“Nna taba ya di double but ke ne ke sa di etse perfect because hona jwale tjena ha ke checka hona le ba bang ba se nang tsebo ya ditlhaku. So ha ke fihla ke tlo sorta bana ho ya ka tsebo ya bona hoba ke ne ke tla be ke tswelletse ka didouble. Mara ba bang ba so tsebe disingle. So ke tlo fihla ke ba sort hore le bona ba iphumane ba se ba le leveleng ya ba bang. Mara ke try hore ba utlwisise disingle words tsena pele, e re ha ba se ba di utlwisisa e be le hona ke tla etsa didouble because ke bona hore ke a struggle hore ba di utlwisise.” [I did not develop phonics and phonics

awareness perfectly because right now because there are learners who are still struggling to learn single letters. So I am going to sort them according to their abilities so that I can move gradually with them from single letters to doubles until they are all in the same level. This workshop made me realise the importance of taking learners step by step from single to doubles for better understanding. I am very happy and on Monday, I will be in full force.] (T2D).

7.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have elaborated on how the workshop was conducted and what observations and reflections were made. In concluding, I briefly summarise some of the issues that emerged from it. The teachers became aware of several issues, which influence how they facilitate the development of reading skills. Firstly, the teachers became aware of the interrelatedness between the cognitive, affective and psychomotor factors. They confirmed that they had pre-occupied themselves with acquiring the knowledge and skills that they had transmit to their learners to the detriment of their affective wellness. This issue linked with the motivational speech delivered at the workshop. The teachers appreciated how that speech revitalised them and reawakened the inspiration to look anew at their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. Secondly, the teachers became aware of the processes that occur when Grade 1 learners demonstrated reading. It was an eye-opening experience for them to understand that so many processes occur when a Grade 1 learner is reading. What was also novel was that those processes could be explained and understood within the theoretical knowledge pertaining to reading.

The teachers always complained about the frequent curriculum changes. It was an epiphanic moment for them to comprehend that the progression/continuity from Curriculum 2005 to the National Curriculum Statement and the Foundations for Learning Campaign actually highlights curriculum streamlining and improvement. Central to this issue was an understanding of reading the policy documents. The teachers also became aware of the importance of lesson planning and preparation and the importance of integrating activities from different components of a lesson.

In the next chapter my discussions will reveal how the spiral cycles of Cycle 2 developed.

CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS IN CYCLE 2 OF THE INTERVENTION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 8 shows how Cycle 2 of the intervention developed. A detailed discussion of this cycle is preceded by an interpretation of the teachers' performance in the *pre-intervention test*, written on Day 2 of the workshop in Cycle 1. Since Cycle 2 pivots on the implementation of the guidelines, I also present a description of how they were formulated.

Included in this chapter is the discussion of how Cycle 2 commenced with a plan developed from insights emerging in Cycle 1. The action in Cycle 2 was carried out by means of lesson presentations through which the teachers implemented the guidelines in Spiral Cycles 1, 2 and 3. The new insights emerging from the observations and reflections of the intervention in Spiral Cycle 1 resulted in a revised plan for improving the implementation of the guidelines. In Spiral Cycle 2 the revised plan was put into motion. Once again the new insights emerging from the observations and reflections of the intervention in Spiral Cycle 2, pointed to a revised plan for improving the implementation of the guidelines and assessing how the process had unfolded thus far. The assessment of the implementation of the guidelines was carried out in Spiral Cycle 3. This chapter also portrays how I rated the teachers' performance according to a scale ranging from 1-5 at the end of each spiral cycle.

8.2 REFLECTING ON THE PRE-INTERVENTION TEST

Before the commencement of Cycle 1, I assessed the *pre-intervention test* the teachers wrote at the workshop. The seven teachers, T1B, T2B, T3B, T4B, T1D, T2D and T3D wrote the test. However, T3B did not hand in her answer sheet when the other teachers handed in theirs.

8.2.1 Reflecting on the teachers' performance in the pre-intervention test

I used Table 8.1 (below) to analyse the teachers' performance in the *pre-intervention test*. The key below was used, and I included a mark obtained by each teacher per question. The sign (0) indicates that the question was answered incorrectly and (-) indicates that it was not answered.

Table 8.1: The teachers' performance in the pre-intervention test

Focus areas	Concepts: Q 1.1 -1.7							Structure of words: Q 2 -5					High frequency	Prior knowledge	Reading process	Cultural background	Marks	%
	1.1	1.2	1,3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	2	3	4	5	6						
T1D	2	2	2	1	0	2	-	1	-	-	-	2	0	2.5	1	15.5	51.7	
T2D	1	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.5	11.7	
T3D	0	0	1.5	0.5	1	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	0	1	-	4	13.3	
T1B	1	-	1	1	1	-	0	-	-	-	-	2	0	1.5	0	7.5	25	
T2B	0	1	0	1	1	-	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	10	
T3B																0	0	
T4B	0.5	0.5	2	0.5	1	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.5	15	

Table 8.1 reveals that the teachers' performance in the test was very poor. The test was marked out of 30 with each question carrying two marks. The teachers obtained an average mark of 5.4 (18%). They did not answer most questions, obtaining marks well below 10. T1D was the only one who answered most questions correctly, obtaining the highest mark of 15.5 (51.7%). Nonetheless, her understanding of the structure of Sesotho words and syllables was not good (Question 3-6), nor did she or the other teachers understand the significance of prior learning in developing reading skills (Question 7). The other five teachers, who attempted to answer a few questions, gave incorrect answers.

Table 8.1 (above) illustrates that teachers found Question 1 very difficult, providing evidence of their lack of understanding of the NCS concepts. In Question 1, the teachers were expected to describe some of the NCS concepts such as *diphetho* (outcomes), *diphetho tse hlokolosi* (critical outcomes) and *diphetho tsa ho ithuta puo*

(learning outcomes), and give an example in each case. For instance in Question 1.3, they had to describe the concept *diphetho tsa ho ithuta puo* (learning outcomes) and give an example. The expected answer was:

1.3 *Diphetho tsa ho ithuta puo* (learning outcomes):

- *Ke ditabatabelo tseo moithuti a tshwanetseng ho di fihlella tshebetsong ya ho ithuta puo ka ho bontsha kutlwisiso ya dikahare tsa thuto.* [LO are the particular kinds of knowledge, skills and values a learner must acquire in order to demonstrate understanding of the content.]
- *Di theilwe hodima diphetho tse hlokolosi le tsa ntshetsopele ho hlalosa seo moithuti a lokelang ho se tseba, ho se bontsha le ho kgona ho se etsa qetellong ya mokgahlelo wa Thuto le Thupelo e Akaretsang.* [LO are derived from the Critical and the Developmental Outcomes to describe what the learner must be able demonstrate and be able to do at the end of the General Educational and Training Band.]
- *Diphetho tsa ho ithuta puo ke tse latelang; ho mamela, ho bua, ho bala le ho boha, ho ngola, ho nahana le ho fana ka mabaka le sebopeho sa thutapuo le tshebediso.* [The LO for Languages are the following; listening, speaking, reading and viewing, writing , thinking and reasoning and language structure and use.]

The following are examples of how some of the teachers answered Question 1.3:

- *Ke diphetho tseo re tshwanelang ho sheba thuto ya puo rona, hore na e fihlelletse eng, e leng ho bala, ho bua, ho mamela, ho ngola, tshebediso ya puo.* [They are the outcomes which focus on teaching our language, what it has achieved which are reading, speaking, listening, writing and language use.] (T1D). The answer is correct but poorly formulated.
- *Ho sebedisa medumo le ditlhaku tse fapafapaneng.* [To use different sounds and letters.] (T2B). The answer is incorrect. The teacher had no idea what the *Learning Outcomes (LOs)* were.
- *Ho sheba, ho bala, ho ngola, ho bua, ho hlalosa.* [To look/see, to read, to write, to speak, and to explain.] (T3D). The teacher was guessing, *ho sheba (to look /to see)* is not an LO for Languages.

The answer in the first bullet indicates that the teacher understood the meaning of the concept *Diphetho tsa ho ithuta puo* (Learning Outcomes). Even though she answered the question correctly and provided correct examples, her answer was poorly formulated. The answer in the second bullet indicates that the teacher had no knowledge of what the concept *Diphetho tsa ho ithuta puo* (Learning Outcomes) meant. The answer in the third bullet showed that the teacher could at least give some examples of the LOs, even though she could not describe the concept. However, the impression is that the teacher was guessing, on the basis that the verbs *ho sheba* (to look/ see) and *ho hlalosa* (to explain) are not examples of LO3.

In Question 2 the teachers' performance became worse. They were asked to explain the syllable structure of Sesotho words, which typically has a CV pattern, e.g., the noun *mosadi* (woman) comprises the syllables mo + sa+ di = mosadi. The teachers failed to supply correct answers. Of the three teachers who answered Question 2, T1D and T2B answered it correctly, while T3D's answer was incorrect. T1D could describe the concept *dinoko* (syllables) but did not know the CVCV pattern. This is how she answered the question:

- *Ke tsela eo lentswe le bopilweng ka teng, ka sehlongwapele le sehlongwanthao.* [It is the way a word is constructed using a prefix and a suffix.]

T1D had a vague understanding of the linguistic terms such as *sehlongwapele* (prefix) and *sehlongwanthao* (suffix) used in the Sesotho word structure. One of the teachers, who did not understand the meaning of the concept *dinoko* (syllables), answered as follows:

- *Ke dintho tseo o di etsang ho atlehisa mosebetsi wa hao.* [It is the things you do to make your work successful.]

The teachers' worst performance was from Questions 3 to 9, however, T1D, T3D and T1B had an idea of what was meant by reading process in Question 8. T1D is the only one who answered Question 9. The teachers' lack of understanding of the concepts they use on a daily basis to facilitate the development of reading skills, was

a cause for concern which meant that they needed help to improve their understanding before they could embark on the intervention.

8.2.2 Findings from the pre-intervention test

One of the findings from the in-depth situation analysis was that teachers always engaged learners in activities in which they combined letters of the alphabet (consonants and vowels) to form syllables and words (Chapter 6:6.2.1.1a). This provided evidence that teachers possessed implicit knowledge about the structure of the Sesotho syllables and words. However, the teachers' answers in the test indicated that they lacked theoretical knowledge about the subject Sesotho. They rarely used Sesotho concepts when they facilitated the development of reading skills. The reason could be that they were comfortable in using home, unspecialised knowledge, which does not foster academic growth or linguistic and communicative competence.

The *pre-intervention test* proved the following:

- teachers did not understand the Sesotho key concepts, such as *diphetho* (outcomes), *maemo a tekolo* (assessment standards) and *dikatlheho* (milestones), which are frequently used in implementing the NCS and the FfLC, due to not read the policy documents;
- teachers did not have theoretical knowledge of the subject Sesotho;
- teachers mixed English and Sesotho words when answering the questions, resulting in many language errors;
- their sentence construction in both English and Sesotho was very poor, leaving their answers incomprehensible;
- their illegible handwriting made it difficult to convey the intended message;
- their writing skill was not well developed; and
- the presentation of information was not logical, requiring their answers to be read several times.

These findings necessitated a plan of action, that it was hoped, would ameliorate the situation. It was therefore crucial to include Guidelines 7 and 8 as part of the intervention (Chapter 8:8.3).

8.2.3 Feedback on the pre-intervention test

On the 20th and 21st July 2011, when the schools re-opened after the winter holidays, I visited School B and D respectively to give them feedback on the workshop and on the *pre-intervention* test. We discussed their performance in the test as discussed in 8.2.2 above. I gave them the memorandum for the test so that they could see how they should have answered the questions. We also unpacked the meanings of the concepts in the *pre-intervention test* to improve the teachers' understanding. The lesson presentations would provide evidence of their understanding of those concepts.

When I explained the Sesotho syllable structure, the teachers who had not attended the workshop seemed perplexed. T4D was a Grade R teacher in 2010, allocated a Grade 1 class in 2011. She was not active in my study and could not attend the workshop, but was interested in the study. T5D was a Grade 1 teacher in 2010 and participated in the in-depth situation analysis. Due to serious personal problems she could not continue her participation in the study. T5D explained that she and the other teachers had not heard about the CVCV structure and did not have any information about it. She inquired about the implementation date of that specific information:

“Rona re qala ho di bona, di implementuwe neng dintho tseo?” [We have never seen/heard of those things, when were they implemented?] (T5D).

I explained that the syllable structure was a fundamental aspect of the subject matter knowledge teachers should have acquired during teacher training and pointed out that the examples of the CVCV structure were clearly explained in the NCS policy documents under ASs of LO 3 (DoE, 2002:40). Her comment was a clear indication that they did not read the Sesotho policy documents. The teachers needed this information to prepare for taking part in the intervention, and be fully aware of the challenges that lay ahead.

8.2.4 Assessment Standards in developing reading skills

Since the teachers' poor performance in the *pre-intervention test* proved that their understanding of curriculum knowledge was superficial, I scheduled another information session for the 27th and 28th July 2011, before they could start with the implementation of the guidelines. The purpose was to strengthen their understanding of the Assessment Standards used in facilitating the development of reading so that they could use them effectively when they start with the intervention. I also needed to make them aware that the activities the learners perform in class, as a demonstration of their understanding of the content, help the teachers to determine how and what learners could do to achieve the ASs.

I had designed a template in which they had to tick the reading activities they engage their learners in to develop their reading skills. Those activities exemplify the prescribed Grade 1 ASs of LO 3 copied from the Sesotho policy documents of the Department of Education (DoE, 2002c:36, 38 & 40). They ticked most of those activities, thus showing that the activities teachers engaged their learners in were helpful in demonstrating the achievement of some of the ASs. What is coming through here is that teachers really need to start reading the policy documents in order to acquaint themselves with curriculum concepts.

8.2.5 Integrating NCS and CAPS in my intervention

In the *Report of the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement*" (DoE, 2009:8), the DoE had already stated the intention to implement the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in 2011. The selected Grade 1 teachers informed me that they had attended the four-day CAPS workshop presented by officials from the DoE, but those from School B and School D had not attended at the same time. Teachers from School D attended it during June school holidays of 2011 and those from School B were supposed to attend during the September school holidays. However, their workshop was postponed to the first week, when the schools re-opened for the fourth term of 2011.

I planned an information session scheduled for the 27th July 2011 with the teachers from both Schools B and D, the aim of which was to share our understanding of the CAPS documents and orientate the teachers from School B about them so that they would be on par with the teachers from School D. The lesson plans featured concepts used in the CAPS documents, such as *aims*, *objectives* and *skills* when planning and preparing lessons. A lesson planning template used at the University of the Free State, Faculty of Education for Practice Teaching and Experimental Classes was modified to replace the outcomes with the aims and objectives.

The launch of CAPS benefitted my study to some extent. When the Foundation Phase teachers attended the CAPS workshops they were provided with a document, *Phonics and Phonemic Awareness for Foundation Phase* (DoBE, 2011c), the release of which was a major breakthrough. Its significance for my study is that it elaborates on how teachers should teach phonics and develop phonemic awareness (GL 6). Although it contains Setswana examples, the Sesotho and Setswana orthography are similar and can be understood by those teachers who are Sesotho and Setswana speakers. It was at this information session that I informed them that the next part of the study, the intervention, would require their commitment and reminded them of their right to quit whenever they wished. T5B withdrew at that stage.

8.3 FORMULATING THE GUIDELINES

The guidelines were the backbone of the intervention (Chapter 6:6.3.1), formulated from the insights that emerged from the in-depth situation analysis, the workshop, the *pre-intervention* test and various information sessions held with the teachers after the workshop. The guidelines (GLs) were helpful in benchmarking the teachers' performance in terms of providing evidence of improvement in their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. The guidelines also helped in monitoring any improvements in the way learners demonstrated the development of reading skills by means of *Assessment Standards* and the *Milestones*. For instance, Guideline 1 (GL 1) was formulated on the information that the use of real books was the cornerstone of development of reading skills and for evoking a passion for reading. The solution to the problem of shortage of reading books was to buy the Big Books and the Small Books. Although the solution was short-term, the use of real books was crucial in

monitoring any improvements in the facilitative role of the teachers and the way learners demonstrated their understanding in developing reading skills. The books were already available at the commencement of Cycle 2.

Since the findings from the in-depth situation analysis and the workshop provided evidence that the teachers were reluctant to read the policy documents, GL 2 was a necessity. The intention was to encourage teachers to read the policy documents in order to enhance their knowledge of the curriculum and to enhance their competence in implementing the curriculum. It was also important to formulate GL 3 to encourage teachers to master the different reading methodologies in improving their facilitative role in the development of their learners' reading skills. The teachers had to possess knowledge about the reading strategies used in facilitating the development of reading skills and equip themselves with relevant skills and values. The READ policy documents were helpful since they contained various reading methodologies and strategies which teachers consulted as they prepared themselves to take part in the intervention part of the study.

The FfLC emphasised integration of the different language skills, reflecting the *LOs*, *ASs* and the *Milestones*, in each lesson unit for effective development of their learners' reading skills. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Home Language (Foundation Phase) emphasises the integration of language skills as well as thinking and reasoning and language use. Contrary to the NCS and FfLC, which focussed on *LOs*, *ASs* and the *Milestones*, CAPS integrates Reading with "phonics" as well as writing and handwriting. Guideline 4 (GL 4) was formulated to ensure that the teachers facilitated the development of reading skills by integrating the different language skills in a lesson (DoBE, 2011a:8; DoBE, 2011b:8). The teachers and I agreed to use the template for the written lesson planning and preparation to ensure the smooth progression from one developmental phase of the lesson to the next (GL 5). I had hoped that in applying this guideline teachers would be encouraged to continuously consult the policy documents, thereby enhancing their academic Sesotho and curriculum knowledge. Most importantly, I was hoping that as teachers write out a full lesson plan they would show improvement in their writing skill. The formulation of GL 6 was intended to prepare them to demonstrate facilitation of the five components of developing reading and to ascertain that they

planned activities which would enhance the development of phonemic awareness in context.

Guideline 7 indicates the significance of using linguistic terms such as *senoko* (a syllable), *tumanoosi* (a vowel) and *tumammoho* (a consonant) to develop the learners' knowledge of phonemes. Guideline 7 was included to ensure that teachers used specialised school knowledge in facilitating the development of reading skills. Since the selected Grade 1 teachers have a tendency to mix Sesotho with other official languages such as Setswana, English and Afrikaans, GL 8 reinforces the use Sesotho HL when the selected Grade 1 teachers facilitate the development of reading skills in Grade 1 classes.

Guideline 8 encouraged teachers to begin to use Sesotho HL in facilitating the development of reading skills, which would hopefully, assist in improving their communicative competence in Sesotho. Using Sesotho academic language, which is written in the policy documents, would hopefully help the teachers to bridge the gap between home (unspecialised) knowledge and the school (specialised) knowledge. Guideline 9 acknowledges that overcrowding is rife in the Grade 1 classes. However, teachers need to develop skills for dealing with overcrowding so that it does not become a barrier to learning. The following guidelines were adopted, with teachers being required to:

1. facilitate the development of reading skills by using real books, the Big Books and the Small Books;
2. read the policy documents and familiarise themselves with the necessary knowledge, concepts and skills contained in those documents;
3. read about and apply different reading methodologies and strategies in facilitating the development of reading skills;
4. integrate different language skills in one lesson unit, including writing and handwriting when facilitating the development of reading skills;
5. use the lesson plan template to plan and present the lesson showing progression of the developmental phases of the lesson;
6. demonstrate how they facilitate the five components of developing reading, with emphasis on phonemic awareness in context (DoE, 2011);

7. use academic language to present reading lessons to bridge the gap between home, non-specialised knowledge and school, specialised knowledge;
8. use Sesotho HL in facilitating the development of their learners' reading skills.
9. learn how to handle large classes.

Since these guidelines were not imposed on us, it was easy for both the teachers and I to take ownership of them. As a researcher, I was eager to see how the process unfolds and how it influences the facilitative role of the teachers in the development of reading skills. The teachers were committed to see what difference the implementation of the guidelines would make in their facilitative role.

8.4 CYCLE 2: IMPLEMENTING THE GUIDELINES

As indicated in chapter 5 (Figure 5.3), the adapted model of the spiral of action research cycles illustrates that the intervention unfolds into Cycles 1 and 2. Both Cycles reflect the *planning*, *acting*, *observing* and *reflecting* phases. However, the *acting* phase of Cycle 2 coils out into three spiral cycles.

The *planning* phase of Cycle 2 was informed by the insights and new understandings emerging from Cycle 1. It was also informed by the findings from the teachers' performance in the pre-intervention test as explained in 8.2. The synthesis of all these findings was instrumental in formulating the guidelines, as explained in 8.3. This phase, therefore, captured the formulation of guidelines, how they would be implemented, how I would assist the teachers in implementing these guidelines and also how the implementation would be assessed.

The *action* phase of Cycle 2 developed into three spiral cycles. Each spiral cycle in turn completes a cyclical process of *planning*, *acting*, *observing* and *reflecting*.

Spiral Cycle 1 indicates the implementation of the guidelines by means of lesson presentations. During the presentations I gave feedback to each teacher indicating areas of improvement still required. The feedback triggered another spiral cycle of implementation of the same guidelines. During Spiral Cycle 2, I became more involved in assisting them to improve the implementation of the guidelines. This implementation continued into Spiral Cycle 3 during which peer assessment was

done while I assessed the whole group. More details on how the spiral cycles developed follow in subsequent sections.

The *observing* phase of Cycle 2 captures my observations of the teachers' implementation and their understanding of the guidelines. This phase was informed by the observations I made during each spiral cycle and the details are captured in chapter 8. The *reflecting* phase involves my reflections on the process of the whole cycle as addressed in chapter 9. Figure 8.1 below shows how Cycle 2 unfolded, suggesting further development of other spiral cycles in implementing the guidelines.

ACTION RESEARCH INTERVENTION

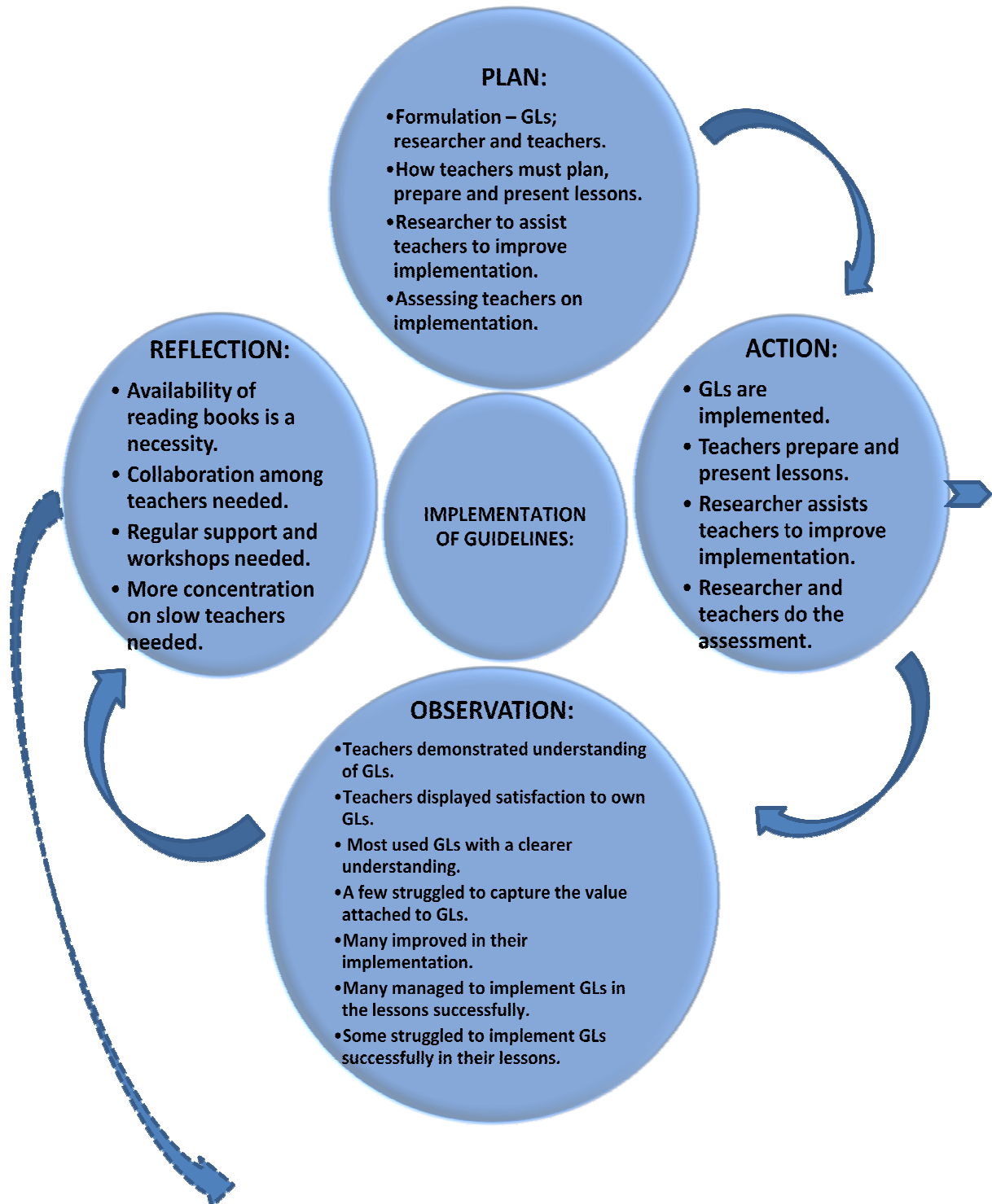


Figure: 8.1 Development of Cycle 2 of the implementation of the guidelines

8.5 SPIRAL CYCLE 1: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES

The *action* phase in Spiral Cycle 1 was achieved by means of preparations and presentations of reading lessons. Each teacher prepared a reading lesson using the lesson planning form we agreed upon. Because a lesson unit could be spread over two to three days we agreed that each teacher had to present a lesson on Day 1 and continue with the same lesson on Day 2. The focus on the second day would then be different from that of the first. I observed and commented on each lesson as the teacher progressed from one phase of the lesson to the next. During the first round of the implementation of the guidelines I observed each teacher twice on two consecutive days. All the lessons were video-recorded except for Lesson 1. My research assistant could not use the video recorder due to technical problems. The other video recorded lessons were stored safely and will be made available if requested by relevant authorised parties.

8.5.1. Lesson 1 (T1DL1): *Moo re dulang teng* (Our neighbourhood)

Since lesson 1 was not video-recorded I give a detailed description of how the lesson progressed.

Introductory phase: The teacher introduced the lesson by allowing learners to recite a poem on road safety rules, which protect the people who live in cities and townships against accidents. She then asked the learners to explain the weather conditions on the day. The learners responded that it was cold because they were wearing warm clothes. Other learners indicated that it was winter because the trees did not have any leaves. The talk about the weather and road rules showed integration of listening and speaking skills (GL 4).

Before reading phase: She then used the strategy *picture walk* to allow learners to discuss the front page of the Big Book (GL 1). *Question generating* strategy was effectively used to guide learners to participate in the lesson and answer the questions posed by the teacher (GL 3). She encouraged them to give a detailed description of what they saw on the cover page, encouraging the development of syntax. They should not just say *Ke bona ngwanana* (I see a girl), but give more

details about the girl. The teacher then used the strategy *predicting* to allow learners to think about the events of the story in subsequent pages.

During reading phase: The teacher read aloud and asked learners to read after her as she continued with *picture walk*. The setting changed from urban (township) area to rural area. The girl, Lerato was nine years old. Lefa, the boy, was eight years old. The teacher asked the learners to point at the numeral 8 anywhere it was written in the classroom. She integrated her Literacy lesson with Numeracy by asking learners the age difference between Lerato and Lefa. It was difficult for learners to work out the age difference as $1(9 - 8 = 1)$. At the end of the story the teacher read that both *Lefa* and *Karabo* were South African citizens. She emphasised the value of sharing the same identity as South African citizens, irrespective of whether they lived in rural or urban areas of the country.

After reading phase: The teacher wrote down the words which appeared frequently in the story on the chalkboard, focussing on the sounds [h] and [f].

- **h** *haufi* (near), *haholo* (too much/in excess), *hape* (again), *hae* (at home), *aha* (to build); and
- **f** *fofa* (to fly), *fana* (to give), *sefofane* (aeroplane)

It was unclear why the teacher introduced the sound [f] because it did not appear frequently in the story. However, she explained that their Learning Facilitator expected them to introduce two new sounds in each lesson. The teacher then proceeded to paste posters on the chalkboard and asked learners to identify the different rooms in the house and the furniture in each room. This was to consolidate understanding of the lesson. The poster was mainly based on the houses found in urban areas (townships), omitting to reinforce the type of houses found in rural areas. The teacher demonstrated to the learners the value of taking pride in their backgrounds, irrespective of whether they lived in a small house, a large house or a shack. All houses provide shelter and resting place.

Concluding phase: Learners repeated the words written on the chalkboard, but this would have been more meaningful had they been asked to explain the meanings and the teacher given some activities to build on word recognition. The teacher had also

prepared the sentence strips which she handed out to the learners to read in their groups. She had the following sentences:

- *Lefa o na le dilemo tse robedi.* (Lefa is eight years old.)
- *Karabo o dula toropong e kgolo.* (Karabo lives in a big city.)

One of the learners got stuck while reading. The teacher asked other learners to help him instead of providing the learner with the strategies and skills to identify the word. The learners could have benefitted more if the teacher had stopped and applied some strategies to help that learner unlock the alphabetic code. The teacher could have asked questions such as:

“Why did you stop?”

“What do you think is the problem?”

“What is the first sound of the word?”

“Which letter represents that sound?”

If the learner still struggled she could have asked her/him to say the word again, pointing at each letter until the learner could say the word correctly.

The teacher divided learners into groups and gave each group a different activity. The learners in the first group cut furniture items from the magazines. The second and third groups read from the sentence strips. The fourth group stood around the teacher’s table for *Guided Group Reading*. They were given the Small Books from which to read. It is not certain if the teacher managed to reach her objectives of the *Guided Group Reading* because of the noise in the classroom.

There were approximately 50 learners in the classroom and the teacher could not effectively monitor their progress in the groups. The research assistant and I helped the other groups to complete their tasks. Most learners could not read from the sentence strips. Other learners could not use their fingers to point at the correct letters and syllables. The learners, who were standing close to the group that was busy with *Guided Group Reading*, listened to the sentences that those learners were reading from the Small Books and repeated those sentences that were read by that

group. They did so while pointing at their own sentence strips which had different sentences. It was very clear that most learners did not know that there was a relationship between letters and sounds. Evidently, the teacher needed to focus more on developing the learners' phonemic awareness and word recognition skills.

This part of the lesson was not well facilitated. Those who did not have pencils or erasers started roaming around in the classroom borrowing from their classmates. As a result the learners could no longer concentrate. Although the lesson was well prepared it was too long and contained too much information and too many activities.

8.5.1.1 *Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 1*

The teacher was well prepared for the lesson (GL 5), which she facilitated very well using *Shared Reading* and *Reading Aloud* methodologies (GL 3), except for the session on group activities. She used several reading strategies such as *picture walk*, *generating questions* and *predicting* to activate learners' prior knowledge, to build on their knowledge and to give them clues about what they were going to read (GL 3). *One-to-one-matching* strategy was also used effectively so that learners could see that words were built up of letters, letter combinations and syllables (GL 6). She also emphasised the use of punctuation marks, such as *kgutlo* (full stop) and *feelwane* (comma), already developing the learners' subject knowledge (GL 7).

The teacher also assisted the learners to build their Sesotho vocabulary by making them aware of the correct Sesotho words, e.g., *leeba* (dove) instead of *lephoi*, *jwang* (lawn) instead of *bojangjeng* (GL 8). The teacher's lesson showed integration between Literacy and Numeracy when she asked learners to determine the age difference between *Lerato* and *Lefa* in the story. The teacher developed the learners' value of citizenship in sharing a common identity as South Africans. She also inculcated in her learners the value of taking pride in their different home backgrounds.

The teacher gave learners differentiated activities. Group 1 read from the sentence strips that she had prepared while Group 2 cut pictures from the magazines of the furniture used in their homes. She was busy with Group 3 doing *Guided Group Reading* (GL 3).

When we discussed her presentation, I advised her to shorten her *picture walk* and reduce the theme into manageable units, which she could spread over two or three days. The focus should be on activities which would help develop phonemic awareness and word recognition.

I did not observe a follow-up of this lesson because of a clash in the timetable. At that time I was busy observing Lesson 2 presented by T2D in a Grade 2 class.

8.5.2 Lesson 2 (T2DL1): *Re a bopa* (We are constructing/ forming)

T2D was responsible for Grade 2 learners in 2011. She presented Lesson 1 with her Grade 2 learners and prepared it again for the Grade 1 learners. The lesson progressed in a similar fashion to Lesson 1, showing the lesson phases of *introduction, before reading, during reading, after reading and conclusion* (GL 5).

Introductory phase: The teacher asked the learners what they had for supper the previous night. She was interested in the words *nama* (meat) and *lebese* (milk), which she wrote on the chalkboard. She asked them where the meat and milk came from. After a few incorrect attempts, one learner answered that the milk and meat come from a cow. She then asked the learners where they could find *kgomo* (cow), *podu* (goat), *kolobe* (pig), *nku* (sheep) and *kgoho* (chicken). The learners answered that they were found at home. She then explained to the learners that those animals are domestic animals. She used the strategy of building prior knowledge of the concepts *diphoofolo tse hlaha* (wild animals) and *diphoofolo tsa mahaeng* (domestic animals).

Before reading phase: She then used the strategy *picture walk* to allow learners to discuss the front page of the Big Book (GL 1). *Question generating* strategy was effectively used to guide learners to participate in the lesson and answer the questions posed by the teacher (GL 3). She encouraged learners to talk about what they saw on the cover page, informing them that a book has a title, an author and a date of publication.

During reading phase: The teacher read the Big Book twice before she asked the learners to join her (GL 1). She focussed on the names of the days of the week and on the plural prefix di- in the following nouns (GL 6):

- *ditshwene* (monkeys), *dithuhlo* (giraffes), *dikwena* (crocodiles), *ditau* (lions)
ditlou (elephants)

After reading phase: She used the strategy *retelling* to assess the learners' understanding of the story. She introduced the sound [t'] which, according to her, appeared in the animals' names, for example: **t** in *tlou* (elephant), *thuhlo* (giraffe) and *tau* (lion).

Concluding phase: The learners discuss their answers in the written activities.

8.5.2.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 2

The lesson was well prepared and well facilitated (GL 5). The teacher used *Reading Aloud* and *Shared Reading* methodologies (GL 3). The introduction was good in showing linkage of *lebese* (milk) as a product of *kgomo* (cow). She also linked the knowledge of the domestic animals to introduce new information about wild animals. She used several reading strategies to activate learners' prior knowledge and to build on their knowledge. *Picture walk*, *generating question* and *predicting* strategies were used to encourage active participation of the learners (GL 3). The teacher helped learners to increase their vocabulary of the domestic and wild animals in Sesotho (GL 8). Through those activities the teacher made learners aware that most domestic animals are valuable, even if not all of them provide food. The *After reading* phase was also well facilitated. The teacher involved learners in a variety of oral and written activities which reinforced understanding of the lesson. She showed integration of the different language skills (GL 4). One of the examples of words the teacher gave was incorrect. The first sound in *thuhlo* is [th] and not [t']. Maybe she did not realise that **th** is a digraph representing one sound, or sufficient theoretical knowledge to facilitate the development of phonemic awareness (GL 6).

The Grade 2 learners' performance showed more maturity in terms of how they responded to the teacher's questions, which they answered by using full sentences, in contrast to the Grade 1 learners, who attempted to answer even before the

teacher had finished formulating them. The Grade 2 learners listened to the questions and the general classroom discipline was good.

8.5.3 Lesson 3 (T2DL2): *Re a bopa* (We are constructing/ forming)

T2D prepared the lesson again for the Grade 1 learners, adapted to suit their level. It progressed very well, showing the phases of *introduction, before reading, during reading, after reading* and *conclusion* (GL 5).

Introductory phase: The teacher introduced her lesson by using the strategy of *activating learners' prior knowledge*. She asked the learners what they had for breakfast in the morning, interested in the words *nama* (meat) and *lebese* (milk) and *mahe* (eggs) which she wrote on the chalkboard. She asked them where the meat and milk come from. Some learners mentioned that meat and milk come from a certain chain of supermarket. By posing questions to them, the learners were made aware that meat and milk bought at the supermarket had already undergone some processing. She asked them questions to help them gradually associate the meat they had for breakfast with the animals such as a cow, sheep, goat and a chicken. The eggs were associated with a chicken. She then asked the learners where they could find *kgomo* (cow), *podu* (goat), *kolobe* (pig), *nku* (sheep) and *kgoho* (chicken). The learners answered that they were found at home. She then explained that those animals were domestic, using the strategy of *building prior knowledge*.

Before reading phase: She then used *picture walk* to allow learners to discuss the pictures on the cover page of the Big Book (GL 1). The *question generating* strategy was effectively used to guide learners to participate in the lesson and answer the questions she posed to the learners (GL 3). She informed the learners that a book has a title, an author and date of publication.

As she continued with *picture walk*, she emphasised the days of the week in Sesotho, which frequently appeared in the story (GL 8). She had written those weekdays on the flashcards and pasted them on the chalkboard each time she read the word aloud:

- *Mantaha* (Monday), *Labobedi* (Tuesday), *Laboraro* (Wednesday), *Labone* (Thursday), *Labohlano* (Friday) and *Moqebelo* (Saturday)

She then asked the learners to come to the front desk and select the correct day of the week day from her flashcards. When the learner had selected the right word, s/he had to read it aloud and paste it underneath or next to the words she had written on the chalkboard.

During reading phase: The teacher read the book twice before asking the learners to join her. She focussed on the verb *bopa* (to construct).

After reading phase: The teacher did the following activities with the learners to develop their phonemic awareness (GL 6):

- She asked the learners to identify the word *bopa* (to construct) in the book and then demonstrated that it had two syllables *bo-* and *-pa*.
- She then asked the learners which word remained when they removed the initial letter **b** from the word *bopa* (to construct). Learners answered that the verb *opa* (to clap hands) or (to ache) remained.
- She asked learners to identify the syllables in the word *opa* o + pa = opa.
- She asked learners what other words can be formed or constructed from the verb *opa* (to clap hands) or (to ache). The learners responded by saying *kopa* (to request).

Concluding phase: The learners wrote the weekdays on the pages provided by the teacher.

8.5.3.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 3

The lesson was well prepared and facilitated (GL 5), integrating *Reading Aloud* and *Shared Reading* methodologies (GL 3). Her introduction tapped on the learners' prior knowledge to build new knowledge, showing linkage of *lebese* (milk) as a by-product of *kgomo* (cow). She linked the learners' knowledge of domestic animals to introduce new information about wild animals using Sesotho words throughout (GL 8).

The teacher used several reading strategies to activate learners' prior knowledge and to build on their knowledge. *Picture walk, generating questions and predicting* strategies were used to encourage active participation of the learners (GL 3). She did activities to reinforce understanding of the week days in Sesotho, role modelling the skill of pointing at letters and syllables as she read several times whilst learners were listening. She was pointing at the words, using *one-to-one-matching* strategy so that learners could see that words are built up of letters, letter combinations and syllables (GL 6). She concentrated on developing the learners' phonemic awareness by involving them in a variety of oral and written activities which helped them to reinforce understanding of the lesson theme (GL 4 & 6).

The *concluding phase* was well done because the learners seemed to have understood the content presented to them although they became restless towards the end of the lesson. I became distinctly aware of the problem of pencils, sharpeners and erasers.

8.5.4 Lesson 4 (T1BL1): *Diphoofolo tsa mahaeng* (Domestic animals)

T1B had participated in the in-depth situation analysis, however, this was the first lesson presented in the study.

Introductory phase: The teacher introduced her lesson by reading the title of the Big Book, pointing at the letters and words contained in the title. She informed the learners that the book was about domestic animals and asked which domestic animals they knew. They mentioned *pere* (horse), *kgoho* (chicken), *kolobe* (pig), *podì* (goat) and *kgomo* (cow). She wrote the words on the board and asked them to read them as she pointed at them. A learner queried whether a cow was a domestic animal because it was found on a farm. The teacher explained that domestic animals were found in areas where people live, whether those people lived in the farm/rural areas or in towns/urban areas (building prior knowledge).

Before reading: The teacher began with a *picture walk*. She asked the learners to identify what they saw on the cover of the Big Book (GL 1). Learners mentioned that they saw *polasi* (farm), *rapolasi* (farmer) and *diphoofolo* (animals). She emphasised

the use of punctuation marks, such as capital letters, at the beginning of a sentence and a full stop at the end. A comma indicates a pause and quotation marks for direct speech. In using these terms, in Sesotho, the teacher was building on the learners' subject knowledge (GL 7).

During reading: The teacher read slowly, indicating capital letters, commas and exclamation marks. The learners read after her. She indicated the usefulness of some animals to human beings, informing the learners that horses were also used in sport and for gambling (betting) on.

After reading phase: The teacher asked learners to work in groups. They matched the animal picture on the left hand side with the correct name on the right hand side. The teacher and I assessed the learners' work. Some learners did well in the activity, proving they understood the content presented.

Conclusion: The teacher summarised the main points.

8.5.4.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 4

The lesson was well structured showing all the phases of lesson development (GL 5). When she started with her lesson she called learners to stand in front in a semi-circle so that they could all see the Big Book (GL 1). A *Shared Reading* methodology was used together with the strategies such as *predicting*, *activating prior knowledge* and *building on prior knowledge* (GL 3). Learners participated in the lesson. Teacher needed to focus more on developing the learners' phonemic awareness (GL 6).

8.5.5 Lesson 5 (T1BL2): *Diphoofolo tsa mahaeng*

This lesson is a continuation of Lesson 4. She skipped the *picture walk*. The teacher focussed on phonemic awareness activities based on the theme *Diphoofolo tsa mahaeng* (Domestic animals).

Introductory phase: The teacher pasted a poster on the chalkboard with words containing the letter **p**. The teacher informed the learners that they were going to learn about the sound [p']. She then wrote the letter **p** lowercase and **P** as a capital letter on the board for learners to read. She asked if there were any learners whose

names contained a letter **p**. The following names were mentioned by the learners Tshepiso, Tshepang and Mpho. She then asked the learners to point at the letter **p** in those names. Another learner said that his name, Kabelo, has a letter **p** in it. The other learners corrected him and made him aware that his name contains the letter **b** and not **p**.

Developmental phase: The teacher asked the learners which domestic animals they knew. They gave examples such as *pere* (horse), and *podu* (goat), whilst the teacher wrote them on the chalkboard.

- She then asked them to count the letters in the word *pere* **p, e, r** and **e**
- She asked them to form syllables **pe + re**

When she asked them to read the word *podu* (goat) on the chalkboard, some of them just guessed and mentioned the following words *kgomo* (cow), *ntja* (dog), *nku* (sheep) and *kolobe* (pig). The learners still had a problem in identifying the initial letters. She had not given them strategies for identifying the initial letters.

Concluding phase: The teacher then put together the flashcards with different names, and asked the learners to select the words *podu* (goat) and *pere* (horse) to assess if they could identify those words.

8.5.5.1 Comments on implementation of guidelines of Lesson 5

The teacher facilitated the lesson fairly well, focussing on recognition of letter, syllables and word recognition activities (GL 6). The teacher could have provided decoding strategies and skills when the learners guessed or got stuck. The learners should have been encouraged to use the words she drilled in simple sentences to build in the syntax aspect.

8.5.6 Lesson 6 (T2BL2): *Moo re dulang teng* (Our neighbourhood)

The theme of this lesson was presented above, so I only give the highlights.

Introductory phase: The teacher did not plan an introduction. She mounted the Big Book on a wooden stand where it was visible to all the learners. She set some ground rules, with learners instructed to raise their arms if they wanted to answer a question and those who were chewing bubblegum were told to throw it in the waste boxes.

Before reading phase: She did a *picture walk* with the learners (GL 3), and asked them to mention the people they saw on the front page of the Big Book and say what they thought they were doing for a living. She then asked the learners to identify the colours they saw. She asked *why* and *how* questions to provoke learners' thinking and to integrate thinking and reasoning skills (GL 4). She emphasised that learners should use the Sesotho words not English, for example, *kgubedu* (red) (GL 8).

During reading phase: She read aloud and asked the learners to read after her, pausing between to ask them questions.

After reading: The teacher and the learners did an exercise on giving directions, with the learners explaining the route Karabo, the character in the story, would take from home to school.

Concluding phase: The teacher summarised the lesson by showing the difference between urban and rural life.

8.5.6.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 6

T2B had too much confidence in her experience as a Foundation Phase teacher and did not exert herself in preparing for that lesson. There was no smooth progression of the phases of the lesson development (GL 5). The *picture walk* was very long. However, she consistently asked the *how* and the *why* questions, integrating thinking and reasoning skill very well in the lesson (GL 4). *Shared Reading* was done from the Big Books (GL 1 and 3). The teacher did not focus on developing letter and word recognition activities (GL 6). I advised her to focus on the development of phonemic awareness in her next preparation.

8.5.7 Lesson 7 (T2BL2): *Moo re dulang teng* (Our neighbourhood)

Introductory phase: The teacher started with the *picture walk*, which was still long. She asked the learners why the names *Lefa* and *Karabo* began with a capital letter, and then explained to them that it was because they were proper nouns. She focussed on the use of capital letters when writing people's names, such as *Keneilwe* and *Kananelo*.

Developmental phase: The teacher asked the learners to break down the following words into syllables (GL 6):

- *dila di + la* *dila ntlo*, (decorate the house with clay),
- *duba du + ba* *duba bohob*, (knead the dough),
- *duka du + ka* *duka sediba*, (stir the water). The learners did not know the meaning of this word.

She then asked learners to give her the verbs ending with the vowel **a**, such as *ama* (touch), then those that ended with **e**, such as *eme*, (stood up). I did not see the relevance of those activities. The relevant part was when she assisted the learners to read from the Small Books (GL 1).

Concluding phase: The teacher then gave learners some activities related to their abilities. The advanced group was instructed to fill in the missing morphemes in the following sentences:

1. *Karabo _ dula toropong* (Karabo lives in town).. **o**
2. *O na _ dilemo tse robong* (He is nine years old). **le**
3. *O dula haufi le moaho _ molelele* (He lives near a high building). **o**

The slower ones had to fill in the missing vowels in the following words:

1. *d_ la* (lives) **u**
2. *mohol_* (big) **o**

The teacher went around the classroom to monitor the learners' progress as they were writing and to assess their work.

8.5.7.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 7

The teacher seemed not to have prepared the lesson well (GL 5), however, she did integrate listening, speaking, reading and writing skills as well as thinking and reasoning and language structure and use (GL 4). She also demonstrated how she facilitated the development of vocabulary and phonemic awareness (GL 6). The only flaw was that some of the activities were unrelated to the theme of the lesson.

8.5.8 Lesson 8 (T3BL1): *Dikarolo tsa selemo* (Seasons of the year)

Introductory phase: The teacher introduced her lesson by discussing the weather conditions with her learners, reminding them that when they arrived at school at the beginning of the year it was still summer, during the month of January and that when they returned from winter holidays it was the month of July. She explained that they were going to learn about the seasons of the year (GL 5).

Before reading phase: She used a poster to guide the learners to answer the questions on the four seasons. She did the *picture walk*, which was very long (GL 3), explaining in great detail each season and its calendar months. She used Setswana words such as *matlhare* instead of the Sesotho word *makala* (leaves).

During reading phase: She read aloud from the Big Book and asked the learners to read after her (GL 1). On the first page was a picture of a girl who says that she lives in Gauteng. She then decided to introduce the sound [x] and the corresponding letter **g** to her learners. However the sound [x] and its corresponding letter **g** are not used as a single sound in Sesotho, rather it appears in a digraph **kg** in words such as *kgale* (a long time ago), *kgotso* (peace). The letter **g** seldom represents a Sesotho sound, except in the case of *Gauteng* (the place of gold).

After reading: The teacher captured the letter **g** lower case and **G** capital letter and did letter and word recognition activities based on this sound (GL 6). However, there was cross-interference with Setswana, which resulted in her misspelling the Sesotho words as follows:

- *gasa* instead of Sesotho word *kgasa*, (to crawl)
- *gabisa* instead of Sesotho word *kgabisa*, (to decorate).

Concluding phase: The teacher summarised the seasons and accompanying months.

8.5.8.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 8

The lesson was very long and confusing and the teacher was poorly prepared. Her lesson did not show a smooth progression between the phases of lesson development (GL 5). The *picture walk* was very long (GL 3) and there was much commotion as learners positioned themselves to have a better view of the Big Book (GL 1 and 9). Setswana mother-tongue interference was an impediment to her facilitation of the development of reading skills in Sesotho, some of the words of which she misspelled (GL 8). *Shared Reading* was done from the Big Book (GL 1 and 3).

At our feedback session on the lesson, I advised T3B to focus on improving on all these issues for her next lesson.

8.5.9 Lesson 9 (T3BL1): *Dikarolo tsa selemo* (Seasons of the year)

Introductory phase: The teacher introduced her lesson by revising the seasons of the year (GL 5), focussing on the word *mariha* (winter) and writing it on the board. She then explained to the learners that they were going to learn about the sound [r].

Developmental phase: She asked the learners to mention words that contain the sound [r]. Learners mentioned names such as *Rethabile*, *Rebabaletswe* and *Relebohile*. The teacher gave an example of the word *mariha* (winter), *apara* (to wear) and *rata* (to love). She asked learners what would happen if she removed the letter **a** from the word *apara* (to dress). The letters that remained made a nonsensical word *-para*. She then asked the learners what could be added to the word *para* to make it meaningful. When the learners could not give the answer she added the suffix *-fini* to form the word *parafini*. Although the word *parafini* (paraffin) exists as a borrowed noun in Sesotho, this specific example was irrelevant in the context of her lesson, albeit relevant to the development of phonemic awareness (GL 6).

The teacher then divided the following words into *syllables*: *diaparo* (clothes) = di + a + pa +ro and *mariha* (winter) = ma+ ri + ha.

An error occurred when she wanted to mention the verb *raha* (to kick), and wrote in on the board as *raya*. Such a verb does not exist in Sesotho.

Concluding phase: The learners were asked to point to the letter *r* from the words written on the board.

8.5.9.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 9

The teacher misspelt the Sesotho words (GL 8) because she had not prepared the lesson thoroughly, and she was Motswana by birth. The vocabulary development was flawed because of interference of Setswana in the way she articulated some Sesotho words. Her consistency in using Setswana words interfered with the formation of the learners' schemata, which is essential for development of different types of knowledge. I advised her to prepare thoroughly the vocabulary she intended to use in class, and verify it with her colleagues before presenting her lesson (GL 5).

8.5.10 Lesson 10 (T4BL1): *Re a ferefa* (We are painting)

Introductory phase: The teacher showed her learners the Big Book (GL 1) and explained that they were going to learn about colours. She also informed them that every book has a title and an author.

Before reading phase: She did the *picture walk* to orientate the learners to the colours (GL 3), for example:

- *mofubedu* (red), *motsho* (black), *mosweu* (white), *mosehla* (yellow).

During reading phase: She read aloud from the Big Book and asked the learners to join in (GL 1). The highlight of the story was the South African flag, which is painted with the colours she wanted her learners to learn about. The teacher made learners aware of the importance of colours in traffic lights: Red for STOP, green for GO, and amber for CAUTION.

After reading: The teacher asked the learners about the significance of the flag, showing integration between Literacy and Life Skills. The learners responded that it is usually lowered half-mast when a high profile government official had died. It is also a symbol of the country at international and national sporting events.

Concluding phase: The teacher asked the learners to identify words frequently used in the story, such as *mmala* (colour).

8.5.10.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 10

The lesson was well prepared, showing balance between the developmental phases of the lesson (GL 5). She did the *picture walk* and applied *predicting* (GL 3). The concepts of the flag and the traffic lights were integrated in the lesson. The learners were taught the significance of hoisting the South African flag at national and international sport events and lowering it to half mast to signify the death of a dignitary. Setswana mother tongue interference was still a problem. She used concepts such as *phitlhong* instead of *lefung/lepatong* (funeral).

8.5.11 Lesson 11 (T4BL2): Re a ferefa (We are painting)

Introductory phase: The teacher began the lesson by revising the colours the learners had learnt the previous day. She asked them to mention the words frequently used in the story, and they responded with *ferefa* (paint) and *mmala* (colour). She explained that they were going to learn how to break *mmala* into letters and syllables (GL 5).

Developmental phase: She then retained the syllable **la** and asked learners to form new words from it (GL 6). Some of the examples given were:

- *bala* (to read) ba + la
- *mmala* (colour) m + ma + la
- *kala* (to weigh) ka + la
- *kula* (to become ill) ku + la

One learner mentioned the *syllable ka*, which could be added to **la**, and read aloud the verb *kala* (to weigh), but with a wrong intonation and consequently missing the meaning of the word. On the basis of the incorrect intonation the teacher rejected that word as nonsensical in Sesotho. She also rejected the verb *kola* (to catch), for the same reason. However, with the appropriate intonation the word *kola* means to catch something e.g., *ho kola tsie* (to catch a locust in the hand). (GL 8)

Concluding phase: She assisted the learners to read the words written on the board, and gave them an exercise to select and write words containing the letter **r** from the following:

- *bana* (children), *apara* (to wear), *meholo* (big ones), *robedi* (eight), *nwa* (to drink), *rata* (to love)

8.5.11.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 11

The lesson was well prepared (GL 5), with the teacher making some attempts to facilitate the development of phonemic awareness and word recognition (GL 6). However, she was unaware that some of the words she rejected as non-existent in Sesotho were actually part of Sesotho vocabulary (GL 8). Integration of language skills, including writing and handwriting, was done (GL 4). The teacher must prepare the Sesotho words (vocabulary development) she intends to develop on a daily basis. She can write them on her flashcards.

8.5.12 Lesson 12 (T3DL1): *Mpone* (Look at me)

Teacher T3D was a Grade 2 teacher in 2011, but presented this lesson to the Grade 1 learners. She did not get an opportunity to be assessed at the same time as her colleagues at the beginning of this cycle.

Introductory phase: The teacher introduced her lesson by inquiring from the learners what they had done to prepare themselves to come to school that morning (GL 5). She explained that they were going to learn about parts of the body. The boy in the story demonstrated the functions of different parts of the body as he played with his football.

Before reading phase: She did the *picture walk* to orientate the learners to the different parts of body and used the strategy of *predicting* to allow them to think ahead about the story (GL 3). The boy in the story demonstrated some soccer skills of handling a football by using some of his body parts e.g. *hlooho* (head), *letsoho* (arm), *lengwele* (knee) and *monwana* (finger). As the lesson progressed she asked learners to recite the poem *Mmele wa ka* (My body), while they were pointing to the different parts of their bodies. Some learners did not know the names. She asked them to state their functions.

During reading phase: The teacher read the story from the Big Book and asked the learners to join in (GL 1).

After reading phase: The learners were given an exercise to match the name of a body part with the picture of it in the Big Book (GL 1). Most of them could not link the body part with the name of that part in the book, indicating lack of development of sight words (GL 6). When the learners had to write the activity I became aware of the problem of lack of pencils and erasers.

Concluding phase: The teacher asked the learners to read from the Big Book while she was pointing to the words.

8.5.12.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 12

The lesson was not well prepared and the facilitation did not go well (GL 5). This could be attributed to her not knowing the Grade 1 learners well because she was responsible for a Grade 2 class in 2011. She did the *picture walk* and applied the strategy *predicting* (GL 3). I noticed that T3D had a problem in pointing to syllables and words to guide her learners to read when I replayed the video.

She engaged the learners in a variety of activities to demonstrate learning, and had brought a football to class. On each page of the Big Book (GL 1) the boy in the story demonstrated a different skill of playing soccer, and she asked learners to imitate one particular skill. Since football is a popular sport amongst boys almost half of the class, including the girls, stood up, wanting to demonstrate it. This resulted in a commotion in the class. The teacher had to put the ball away. From that moment onwards it was difficult for her to maintain discipline in the class (GL 9).

8.5.13 Reflections on the implementation of guidelines in Spiral Cycle 1

Drawing on the observations of how teachers facilitated the development of reading skills there was some evidence that they were beginning to understand their facilitative role. They became aware of the extent of the preparation involved before they could present a reading lesson (GL 5). The lesson plan form guided them in planning each phase and thinking of how to maintain balance in facilitating the five

components of reading. However, some indicated that their written lesson plans were not ready on the day I assessed them. The availability of the written lesson plans would have allowed me to assess their presentations on the basis of them. Instead, I assessed them on their preparation and how they presented the lesson using the lesson planning template form as a guide. I therefore refrained from pressurising them with the written lesson plans. However, I requested each teacher to keep a journal as evidence of their participation in the intervention.

The stories in the Big Books were very helpful in selecting the theme for each lesson. However, they only contain the stories from which to determine the theme which had to be aligned with the aim and the objectives of the lesson. The stories helped to contextualise the content to be presented by applying *Shared Reading*, *Reading Aloud*, *Guided Group Reading* methodologies (GL 3). The teacher also selected the strategies, methods, activities and resources which would help learners to make meaning of the content presented to them. The teacher also prepared the logical sequence of how activities unfolded according to the developmental phases of the lessons (GL 5). For instance, the teacher may decide to teach a language aspect such as forming plurals. She carefully selected the nouns in the story that would make it easy for learners to demonstrate understanding of the plurals. In *Shared Reading*, she orientated the learners to those nouns by explaining their meaning and structure.

Further attention is required for the teachers to determine the role of *picture walk* in the lesson. This understanding will help in ensuring that it does not take up the entire lesson. Each lesson must sufficiently cover some of the components of facilitate reading. For instance some stories in the Big Books, such as *Dikarolo tsa selemo* (Seasons of the year) and *Moo re dulang teng* (Our neighbourhood) are too long to be dealt with in one lesson (Chapter 7:7.3.1.9: Lesson 9 T3BL1), so one theme can be extended over a two-week period to allow more depth in dealing with a specific component of facilitating reading.

The effective facilitation of the development of reading skills means that the learners take centre stage. The teacher should create learning spaces in their classroom in which they actively take part in constructing new knowledge and demonstrating

understanding of the content presented by achieving the *LOs* and the *ASs*. In providing for scaffolding the teachers must take cognisance of the significance of using *questioning technique* and increasingly use higher-order questions. These types of questions challenge the learners' thinking and maximise learning. In using higher-order questions, the teachers foster reading with meaning and comprehension skills.

A major problem I observed with regard to the learners was that they still had difficulty in realising the relationship between the sounds and the letters when they were reading. It showed lack of phonemic awareness. Evidently, every reading lesson should, to a great extent, address developing phonemic awareness.

Overcrowding in the classrooms impacted negatively on how the teachers facilitated the development of reading skills. The teachers agreed that they needed assistance when they presented the *Guided Group Reading* activities to monitor the groups who were not doing group reading and to minimise noise and disruptions. The teachers suggested that they could use the Grade 3 learners as group leaders. Another suggestion was to train those of their own Grade 1 learners, who were advanced to act as group leaders (GL 9). The preferred option was to use the Grade 1 learners because the former option would disrupt the Grade 3 classes.

Although the teachers had shown improvements in the way they prepared and presented their reading lessons, they needed to improve on the following areas:

- Complement *Shared Reading* with *Reading Aloud* and *Guided Group Reading*;
- Use Small Books during *Guided Group Reading*;
- Focus more on developing learners' phonemic awareness;
- Vary the Writing and Handwriting skills according to the learners' competence;
- Train group leaders to handle group activities.

8.5.14 Rating teachers' performance in Spiral Cycle 1

I rated the teachers' performance in implementing the guidelines based on the observations and reflections I made after each lesson. I rated them according to a scale ranging from 1 Poor; 2 Satisfactory; 3 Good; 4 Very good; and 5 Excellent.

Table 8.2: Rating teachers' performance in Spiral Cycle 1 of the intervention

GUIDELINES	RATING	T1 D	T2 D	T3 D	T1 B	T2 B	T3 B	T4 B
Using Big and Small Books: GL 1	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	3	3	2	3	3	2	2
Reading policy documents: GL 2	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	2	2	1	2	2	1	2
Applying reading methodologies: GL 3	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	3	3	2	3	3	2	3
Integrating different language skills: GL 4	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	3	3	2	3	3	1	2
Planning, preparing and presenting lessons: GL 5	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	3	3	1	2	3	2	3
Developing phonemic awareness: GL 6	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	4	4	2	4	3	2	3
Balancing between HK and SK: GL 7	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	3	3	2	3	3	2	3
Using Sesotho HL: GL 8	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	3	3	2	3	3	2	2
Handling large classes: GL 9	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	3	3	2	3	3	2	3

The teachers presented the lessons according to the guidelines adopted. However, the teachers' progress in applying the guidelines was not the same. For instance, the selected Grade 1 teachers attempted to make use of the Big Books but had not yet started with the Small Books (GL 1). T3B and T4B still had problems with handling the Big Book in a way that would enable all the learners to see it. Teachers performed poorly on policy documents (GL 2). T3D, T2B, T3B and T4B were still uncertain about developing the five components of facilitating reading, and did not check time allocation for the different lesson components. As a result, some (T2B and T3B) spent too much time on the *picture walk* (GL 5). They did not read the policy document on facilitating the development of phonemic awareness. All seven teachers were conversant with the reading methodologies of *Shared Reading* and *Reading Aloud*, albeit to varying degrees (GL 3). T1D, T2D, T1B and T2B were more confident than T3D and T3B, who were still struggling. The seven teachers had not attempted to facilitate the development of reading skills by applying *Guided Group Reading* before. In observing that they were competent in presenting reading lessons based on *Shared Reading* and *Reading Aloud* it was time for them to present *Guided Group Reading*.

Since most teachers did not give me their written lesson plans I rated them on the basis of their preparation and presentation of the lessons in accordance with the lesson planning template. Most of them used Sesotho HL, but some English concepts were used frequently, such as numbers and colours. T3B and T4B worked hard in implementing GL 8. T3B was a Motswana by birth, while T4B was a Xhosa home language speaker, married into a Setswana family. Both worked at a school that offered Sesotho as HL. Handling large classes was still problematic, although T1D, T2D, T1B and T2B managed to maintain discipline. T2D was particularly skilful in managing discipline in her Grades 1 and 2 classes.

8.6 SPIRAL CYCLE 2: IMPROVING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES

The *plan* in this cycle was to ensure that the teachers continued to plan, prepare and present the reading lessons, whilst indicating progression from one developmental phase of the lesson to the next. This time they had to focus on complementing *Shared Reading* with *Guided Group Reading* and *Writing*, on developing learners' phonemic awareness, varying the reading activities according to the learners' capabilities, spreading a theme over several lessons, and training group leaders to handle group activities effectively. The lesson presentations started with *Shared Reading* to orientate the learners to the theme. The teachers still used *picture walk*, *predicting* and *questions generating* strategies to enhance active learner participation. However, my focus in Spiral Cycle 2 was to observe how they complemented *Shared Reading* with *Guided Group Reading*. I also observed which activities the other learners were engaged in while the teacher was busy with *Group Guided Reading*.

8.6.1. Lesson 13 T1DL5: *Dikarolo tsa selemo* (Seasons of the year)

The teacher had prepared her lesson unit based on the theme *Dikarolo tsa selemo* (Seasons of the year), but this time her emphasis was on selemo (spring). She had prepared the following sentences which she had written on the sentence strips.

- *Dipalesa le tsona di a kgaba.* (Flowers start to blossom).
- *Jwang bo qala bo eba botala.* (The grass becomes green).
- *Difate di qala ho hlahisa makala a matala.* (The trees grow green leaves).

The learners were already familiar with the sentences contained in the Big Book relating to *selemo* (spring). She created new ones so as to avoid memorisation of sentences written in the Big Book. In so doing, the teacher was scaffolding the learners' thinking. The first group did *Guided Group Reading*, using the Small Books (GL 1 and 3) and the second was given an activity from the Learners Workbooks. They read and wrote the names of the seasons, indicated by pictures in the books (GL 4). The third and fourth groups had to build the names of the four seasons (GL 6). The teacher had prepared many letter cards and they had to identify each letter that constituted the word, e.g., *selemo*, and then place it next to the others. They then pasted each letter onto a poster to build the complete word.

8.6.1.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 13

The teacher had thoroughly prepared a well-structured lesson (GL 5). She gave learners different activities according to their level of competence, and they had an opportunity to read from the Small Books (GL 1). The theme was reduced to only one season, spring. The activity of building words from letters was appropriate for facilitating phonemic awareness (GL 6). However, handling of large classes remained a problem.

8.6.2 Lesson 14 T2DL5: *Dikarolo tsa selemo* (Seasons of the year)

T2D presented this lesson to a Grade 1 class. The learners were already familiar with the teacher and how she facilitated the development of reading skills. She had thoroughly prepared her lesson based on the theme *Dikarolo tsa selemo* (Seasons of the year). She focussed on all the seasons and explained that each comprised three months. After they said the months of each season she focussed on names of the months beginning with the letter **p**, such as *Pherekong* (January), *Phupjane* (June), *Phupu* (July), *Phato* (August) and *Pudungwane* (November).

The teacher did not do *Guided Group Reading* (GL 3), but she had copied the story from the Big Book onto a page for the learners. She asked them to read in pairs from their pages. She then asked them to identify how many times the syllable **ho** appeared in the story. She asked them to read individually. At the end of the lesson

she gave them a writing activity to match the picture depicting the season summer, with the correct word and write the activity in their books (GL 4).

8.6.2.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 14

The teacher thoroughly prepared the lesson (GL 5). She introduced the sound [p'], which according to her was represented by the letter **p** which appeared in the names of the following calendar months in Sesotho, e.g. *Pherekgong* (January), *Phupjane* (June) and *Phupu* (July) (GL 6). The teacher should have made learners aware that the letter **p** and **ph** are two different phonemes which can change the meaning of the word if they are substituted. Learners also gave examples of other words which begin or have the letter **p** e.g. *palama* (to ride). They read from the pages on which she had written the story. She then gave an activity from the Big Book which they had to complete in their exercise books.

8.6.3 Lesson 15 T3DL5: *Mpone* (Look at me)

T3D was also a Grade 2 teacher in 2011. She did not feel comfortable facilitating her lesson with the Grade 1 learners. She presented this lesson in her Grade 2 class. Although this was a Grade 2 class the learners still struggled with letter-sound relationship (GL 6).

8.6.3.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 15

The teacher had prepared the lesson well (GL 5). She did the *picture walk* and asked questions to help learners predict the next events in the story. They were given different activities according to their level of competence. She complemented *Shared Reading* with *Guided Group Reading* (GL 3). Learners read from the Small Books while she helped them hold the books correctly and read from left to right (GL 1). Grade 2 learners still had a problem pointing correctly, indicating inability to associate the sound and the letter (GL 6), perhaps exacerbated by her own inability to point correctly.

8.6.4 Lesson 16 T1BL5: *Mpone* (Look at me)

T1B thoroughly prepared a lesson on *Mpone* (Look at me). The activities that she prepared for the learners encouraged active participation in the lesson. In Group 1, the learners had to match the picture on the left hand side with the correct word

amongst the three on the right hand side and circle it (GL 4). The second group were told to match the syllable on the right hand side of the butterfly drawn on the page with the syllables on the right hand side and write the word they had formed (GL 6). The last group had to match the letter on the left of the page with the correct one on the right.

The group, with the teacher's assistance, read from the Small Books by pointing at the letters and syllables (GL 1). They also did a word building exercise from the words that appeared frequently in the text (GL 6).

8.6.4.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 16

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher resorted to a teacher-centred approach of telling and explaining, instead of challenging the learners' thinking by asking productive questions. She did not effectively integrate thinking and reasoning with the other language skills (GL 4). The *picture walk* was ineffective because learners did not participate (GL 3), however, towards the end she asked them to *predict* what would happen when the boy had finished his training. The other learner activities were planned well. She managed to get the learners to talk about their favourite footballers.

The teacher made use of group leaders to hand out the pages, but their role in the group activities remained dormant (GL 9). She honed the learners' listening skills as they listened to the instructions she gave to each group. She used Sesotho terms such as *dinoko* (syllables), *dithaku* (letters) (GL 7 & 8), and demonstrated how the learners who were busy with *Guided Group Reading* should read (GL 3), emphasising how to point correctly, page through the book and pause at relevant punctuation marks.

8.6.5 Lesson 17 T3BL5: *Ditholwana tse sehlopha* (A bowl of fruit)

The teacher started the lesson with a *picture walk*, allowing learners to *predict* the next events on the next pages of the Big Books (GL 3). She allocated different activities for the groups to give her time to do *Guided Group Reading*. The activities were meaningful. She used a poster which depicted the four seasons and asked learners to identify the difference between them. She had also prepared flashcards to

reinforce understanding and prepared sentence strips which helped them to read. They also did word-building activities and read from the Small Books (GL 1 and 6).

However, when I was monitoring what the other learners were doing in their groups I realised that the activities were not based on the theme *ditholwana* (fruit). Group 1 did an activity on animals, Group 2 on bathing, whilst Group 3 was supposed to place a missing letter in the given words. Those words were unrelated, e.g., *molomo* (mouth), *naledi* (a star) and *noha* (a snake). She acknowledged that she did not have enough time to plan thoroughly for those group activities.

8.6.5.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 17

The teacher showed some improvement in the way she presented the lesson over previous occasions (GL 5). She was very careful to use Sesotho words with the correct intonation (GL 8), and reduced the theme into a manageable unit. The main flaw was that she still spent too much time doing the *picture walk*. The level of noise was not as high as in previous lessons, suggesting that dealing with small groups was more effective than with the whole class (GL 9). The activities she prepared for *Guided Group Reading* were meaningful because they reinforced understanding.

8.6.6 Lesson 18 T2BL5: *Ditholwana tse sehlopha* (A bowl of fruit)

The teacher presented a full lesson showing the progression of the developmental phases of the lesson (GL 5). She handed out the Small Books for the group of learners with whom she did *Guided Group Reading* (GL 1 and 3). The second group was given the sentence strips and instructed to read aloud each one individually and as a group. They then had to write those sentences in their books (GL 4). The third group of learners were given letter cards which they used to build words (GL 6). In the *Guided Group Reading* session (GL 3), the teacher read aloud with the learners, demonstrating how to page through from one page to the next and how to point properly. When she realised that some learners were struggling to use their fingers to point she asked them to use their pencils to point.

8.6.6.1 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 18

T2B was well prepared for the lesson and the activities were well prepared (GL 5). She demonstrated skills such as holding a book, paging through and pointing

correctly. She had trained the group leaders to ensure that the group activities were carried out according to the instructions (GL 9). Since she had prepared the lesson well the learners enjoyed it and completed the tasks assigned.

8.6.7 Reflections of implementation of improved guidelines in Spiral Cycle 2

During the third term of 2011 it was difficult to access the teachers because of other commitments, such as preparing the schedules and reports of the learners. Teachers at School B had to attend the CAPS workshop when the schools reopened after the September recess, and were busy with the Annual National Assessments (ANA). Two of the teachers at School B were booked off ill for several weeks. Six teachers participated in Spiral Cycle 2, the seventh being unavailable because she was writing Advance Certificate in Education (ACE) examinations. Since I could not work consistently with the teachers throughout the term, due to unforeseen circumstances, the teachers' improvement in facilitating the development of reading skills was not as phenomenal as I had anticipated.

Although the teachers prepared their lessons well, not all gave me their lesson plans (GL5). Seemingly, they were not used to writing out a full lesson plan, but rather a sketchy weekly one. They complained that the type of lesson plan I expected was very demanding. In considering their circumstances we agreed that the written lesson plans would be included in the journals. Consequently, the rating in the scale is based on the quality of their lesson preparation rather than on their lesson plans. The lesson plans, as one of the requirements of the teachers' journals, were assessed when the teachers had submitted their complete journals at the end of the intervention.

In improving the implementation of the guidelines, the teachers were supposed to reduce the themes into smaller, more manageable units that would help them to integrate other components of the literacy lesson. There was a marked improvement in that regard. For example, in Lesson 13 (8.6.1), the teacher decided to focus on one season (spring) instead of treating all four in a lesson. They were becoming more confident in applying the *Shared Reading* and *Reading Aloud* methodologies. However, teachers still needed more time to apply *Group Guided Reading* methodology in facilitating the development of reading.

The highlight of the lesson presentations in Spiral Cycle 2 was the preparation of the reading activities for the learners. They helped them to demonstrate understanding of the content taught and the skills they acquired on the day. Although the teachers did not use the concept *Assessment Standards* when presenting the reading lessons, the activities in which they engaged their learners helped them to demonstrate the achievement of some of the *Assessment Standards*. *Picture walk* allowed learners to discuss the characters, events and setting of the story, while *predicting* helped them to guess and think what the story was about from the cover of a Big Book. *Illustrations* were used to interpret the meaning of stories, to tell and retell a story, and assisted the learners to demonstrate the achievement of the AS **use visual cues to make meaning**. In using *Guided Group Reading*, the learners were given opportunities to read from the Small Books and hence were able to demonstrate the achievement of the AS **role-play reading**. Since learners took turns to do *Guided Group Reading*, due to shortage of Small Books, it was difficult for them to demonstrate the achievement of AS **role-play reading** at the same time. Most learners still had not yet had the opportunity to hold the book the right way up, turn pages appropriately, look at words and pictures or use pictures to construct ideas. When the learners read a story with their teachers, such as *Moo re dulang teng* (Our neighbourhood), they discussed the main idea. The story teaches the learners that people are inhabitants of certain environments, be it in a city or on a farm. Both have different life experiences which are nevertheless fulfilling. In this story a comparison is shown between urban and rural life, and the teachers also assisted their learners in discussing the main characters, such as *Lefa* and *Karabo*. In so doing, they also demonstrated values such as citizenship. In *Ditholwana tse Sehlopha* (A bowl of fruit) learners understood the value of eating healthy foods. The teachers, to some extent, asked learners to explain why they liked or did not like the story and to support their answers. When learners were busy with the above activities they were trying to **make meaning of written texts**. The teachers were gradually orientating learners towards reading comprehension.

The teachers engaged their learners in various reading activities to help them demonstrate the achievement of the AS *recognising letters and words in order to make meaning of written text*. The activities of building words from letter cards helped the learners to match the sound and the letter representing the sound, e.g., in

the word *maroha* (winter) the initial sound [m] is represented by the letter **m**. They also realised that the words were built up with different letters, arranged in a sequence, e.g., the word *maroha* (winter) consists of the letters **m + a + r + i + h + a**. As the learners were busy with the activities they demonstrated thinking and reasoning skills in order to complete the different tasks assigned. They were also assigned writing activities, e.g., In Lesson 13 (8.6.1:T1DL5). They had to view and interpret the pictures in their Workbooks and write the names of the seasons depicted in the pictures.

The great challenge for the teachers was to assist their learners towards demonstrating the *Assessment Standard develop phonic awareness*. Some learners still found it difficult to demonstrate an understanding of the letter-sound relationship, because the teachers did not equip them with the skills to decode new words. When a learner became stuck while reading, teachers had a tendency to ask others to help, without explaining why the learner had become stuck in the first place.

The teachers could have used some strategies and skills discussed in Chapter 4 (4.6.2; 4.6.3). For instance, the teachers could ask a learner who stopped at a new word the following questions to help her/him to make sense of it:

- “What could you try?”
- “Do you know a word that starts like that?”
- “Is there a part of the word that can help you?”
- “What are you going to do?”
- “Go back and reread, think about the story and start to say the word”.

Teachers were unable to assist learners to move beyond recognising single consonants such as **b** in *bana* (children) and **k** in *kula* (to become ill), to recognising consonant digraphs, such as **ts** in *tsamaya* (to go) and **tl** in *tloha* (to move), in trigraphs such as **tlh** in *tlhapi* (fish) and **tsh** in *tshepiso* (promise).

Before each teacher could commence with the *Guided Group Reading* session, she spent some time explaining to the other groups how they must do the activity assigned. As they explained to the learners they became conscious of using Sesotho HL (GL 8), and constructed simple sentences in Sesotho to instruct learners in each group how they had to do their tasks. During the *Guided Group Reading* sessions,

the learners started reading from the Small Books (GL 1), and the teachers gave individual learners some attention. In Lesson 18 (8.6.6), T2B made attempts to assist learners as to how they must hold a book, how to point using their fingers and how to observe punctuation marks.

Although the teachers had shown some improvement in facilitating the development of reading skills there were still areas that required attention. The group that was supposed to do *Guided Group Reading* with the teacher waited too long for the teacher to finish giving instructions to the other groups, leaving those learners with nothing to do. Another area which required attention was monitoring the learners' progress in completing the written tasks in their groups. Since the teacher would be busy with *Guided Group Reading* she would be unable to supervise the other groups, who became noisy and lost focus. During the lesson presentations my research assistant and I helped the groups who were struggling. Some teachers had begun to use some of learners as group leaders. However, those learners needed to be trained in the role.

In implementing the guidelines, I was hoping that the teachers would add some rigour to the way they facilitated the development of reading skills on a daily basis. Apparently that was not the case. They were still uncertain of how far they would be crossing the boundaries set by their HoDs and the LFs if they sustained their commitment to the implementation of the guidelines. This uncertainty was evidenced by some teachers regressing into their old practices (8.6.4: Lesson 16:T1BL5).

The shortage of Big Books and the Small books remained a challenge for the teachers, who had already treated most of the stories contained in the few Big Books purchased for the two schools. The present Grade 1 learners, who would be in Grade 2 in 2012, would need new books with new themes. Shortage of books inhibited learners in advance to the level of independent reading. The practice of using photocopies does not nurture a love for books and reading for enjoyment. They also need a variety of themes to help them develop different types of knowledge.

8.6.8 Rating teachers' performance in Spiral Cycle 2

I once more rated the teachers' performance in implementing the guidelines based on the observations I made after each lesson and on the basis of the epiphanic

moments which occurred during the lesson presentations. I rated them according to a scale ranging from 1 Poor; 2 Satisfactory; 3 Good; 4 Very good; and 5 Excellent.

Table 8.3: Rating the teachers' performance in Spiral Cycle 2 of the intervention

GUIDELINES	RATING	T1D	T2D	T3D	T1B	T2B	T3B	T4B
Using the Big and Small Books:GL 1	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	4	4	3	4	4	3	X
Reading policy documents: GL 2	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	4	4	2	3	3	3	X
Applying reading methodologies and strategies: GL 3	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	4	4	3	4	3	3	X
Integrating different language skills: GL 4	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	4	4	3	4	3	3	X
Planning, preparing and presenting lessons :GL 5	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	4	4	3	4	4	3	X
Developing phonemic awareness: GL 6	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	5	5	3	4	4	3	X
Balancing between Home Knowledge and School Knowledge: GL 7	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	4	4	2	4	4	2	X
Using Sesotho HL: GL 8	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	4	4	3	4	4	3	X
Handling large classes: GL 9	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	3	4	3	3	3	3	X

The teachers were beginning to show a steady improvement in facilitating the development of reading skills. In complementing *Shared Reading* with *Guided Group Reading*, more learners were exposed to the Small Books. They learnt how to hold a book, to point using fingers and how to read from left to right. Prior to the commencement of Spiral Cycle 2, T1D and T2D, asked me to delay the commencement of this cycle so that they could devote some time reading about *Guided Group Reading* in the policy documents. That was a sign of empowerment, since the teachers took the initiative to orientate themselves first before they could present *Guided Group Reading* in class.

The teachers also showed improvement in how they developed phonemic awareness, word recognition and vocabulary, except for T3D. T4B was not available to present lessons in Spiral Cycle 2. T1D, T2D and T1B set the pace for other teachers. T1D was very professional in her approach and to some extent authoritarian in the way she related to her learners. She was in control, but not in a threatening way. The learners were reprimanded by T1D and reminded that none of them could ever be *mme* (madam). T2B, however, was more inviting in her approach

and took the learners along her journey of empowerment. When the learners became unruly she would remind them that she only talked to learners whose arms were folded, and the learners would immediately oblige.

T3B also showed improvement in using Sesotho words as they communicated with the learners during lesson presentation. She began to select appropriate Sesotho words and consciously avoided using Setswana ones as she did in the previous lessons. Being a role model for her learners meant that they imitated and acquired the language that she used with them. They had already acquired the Setswana words she used frequently and they used the same intonation to pronounce and articulate them. When the teacher started using the relevant Sesotho words it was difficult to reverse the process with the learners. The teachers showed improvement in allocating differentiated activities to the learners according to their capabilities. The Grade 1 classes at School B were not so overcrowded in the third term, because learner enrolments were decreasing. Another primary school was officially opened and many parents requested transfers from School B to the new school, which was closer to the homes of some of the learners.

8.7 SPIRAL CYCLE 3: ASSESSING IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDELINES

Spiral Cycle 3 of the intervention pivots on the assessment of the implementation of the guidelines. It was actualised as a workshop, the rationale being to involve other significant role players to assess the teachers' performance in the implementation of the guidelines. This workshop was run on the theme *Observation and assessment of the teachers' performance*, with all seven teachers participating. I joined my supervisor and a representative from the School Management Team (SMT) of each school, together with the teachers, on a panel of assessors. Each teacher had to plan a lesson, present it, be assessed and receive feedback from the others. The template for the lesson plan form was modified to serve as an assessment form. At the end of the presentations, on Day 1 and 2, we held a mini-conference to reflect on the teachers' performance.

The following arrangements were made prior to the workshop:

- set the date and decided on the venue of the workshop (Schools B and D) over two days (teachers and me);
- informed the teachers at Schools D and B to prepare for the assessment workshop and to make the necessary arrangements (teachers and me);
- invited the SMTs or their representative to attend the workshop (teachers and me);
- designed the programme and decided on the participants; teachers and learners from Schools B and D and my supervisor (teachers and me);
- set the *post-intervention test* (me);
- organised a caterer (teachers and me); and
- made copies of the lesson plan forms and the assessment forms research assistant and me).

On Day 1 of the workshop, all the participants gathered at School D and on Day 2 at School B. Each teacher was expected to plan, prepare and present her lesson, indicating the sequence of its phases (GL 5). Teachers T1D, T2D and T1B took the initiative to prepare their lessons on new themes they had not presented before. Teachers T3D, T2B, T3B and T4B repeated the previous lessons with some changes. The teachers facilitated the lessons using the strategies of *picture walk*, *predicting*, *activating prior knowledge*, *building prior knowledge* and *generating questions* to involve the learners in the lessons (GL 3). They had reduced the themes into manageable segments to allow integration of such components as vocabulary and phonemic awareness (GL 6). Since the presentations were video-recorded I give only my reflections and those of other participants on each lesson.

8.7.1 Comments on the *implementation of guidelines in Lesson 19 T1DL6: Letsatsi la Batjha (Youth Day)*

T1D prepared thoroughly a lesson on *Letsatsi la Batjha* (Youth Day) from the Big Book (GL 1 & 5), integrating the language skills (GL 4) and applying *Shared Reading* and *Guided Group Reading* (GL 3). Before starting she explained very well the aim and objectives of her lesson, indicating that she had consulted the CAPS HL Foundation Phase documents during preparation (GL 2). In the introduction, she asked questions which encouraged learners to talk about certain celebratory days,

such as birthdays and public holidays, which she linked with the *Youth Day* assigned to the 16th of June every year. She used Sesotho HL throughout her presentation (GL 8), however, when emphasising the date of *Youth Day* she repeatedly referred to the sixteenth of June, instead of using Sesotho adjectival phrase *Phupjane ka la leshome le metso e tshelela* (June the sixteenth). She then read from the Big Book and the learners read after her (GL 1). As she read the title of the Big Book she asked them to identify the sound [t'] as it appeared in the title, *Letsatsi la Batjha* (Youth Day), with focus on GL 6. However, some of the instances of the letter **t** were part of the digraph **ts** and **tjh** and did not represent the sound [t']. She could have developed the learners' phonemic awareness by explaining the letter-sound relationship of the digraph **ts** and trigraph **tjh** in the words *letsatsi* and *batjha*. There was also an opportunity to refer to the typical CVCV structure of many Sesotho words.

In the story, the characters were painting the South African flag using different colours. She did the *picture walk* and read from the Big Book while learners read after her (GL 1 and 3). She then pasted the South African flag on the board to assist them to count the colours in it. They counted using English numerals rather than Sesotho ones, e.g., one (*nngwe*), two (*pedi*), three (*tharo*) until six (*tshelela*). This aspect of the lesson showed integration between Literacy and Numeracy. The learners read aloud from the sentence strips that the teacher pasted on the board, e.g., *Batho bohle ba a keteka*. (All the people celebrate). She helped the learners to identify some letters on the flashcards (GL 6) and asked them to read the sight words on flashcards she had prepared.

The learners were then divided into groups and given different tasks to do while the teacher was busy with *Guided Group Reading* (GL 3). She gave instructions on how each group should perform its task while simultaneously reinforcing understanding of some concepts. Group 1 worked together to shade in the colours of the traffic lights as illustrated on the poster. Group 2 coloured in the South African flag. Unfortunately, the colours on the poster were still written in English. Group 3 built words from the letter cards (GL 6). The group leaders helped to oversee group activities (GL 9). In *Guided Group Reading*, reading with fluency remained a problem since learners still

used their fingers to point to letters and words. Some still pointed incorrectly. The learners gave feedback of the work they did.

8.7.1.1 Comments by other participants on Lesson 19: Letsatsi la batjha (Youth day)

In this section, I captured how T1D was assessed by her peers and my supervisor. Professor made T1D aware that she had placed the flag on the board facing the other way round. She also commented on the use of numeral 16 in English and not in Sesotho. The assessors were unanimous that the lesson was very good.

Prof: “I found the lesson very well structured with clear objectives and I enjoyed the learning environment very much. The classroom has all the numbers, the words and the whole environment is very rich. If there is no teacher around, you can still learn a lot from the classroom environment.”

TD4: “I joined the group in the middle of the project, but I liked the way T1D was presenting the lesson and I think I am going to adopt her style because it is so empowering and it boosts one’s confidence”.

T2B, “I liked the part where the teacher was teaching about the significance of celebrating birthdays and holidays such as the Youth Day celebrated on the sixteenth of June”.

T2D: “I liked the values of citizenship. She should have used Sesotho term for sixteen. The teacher did not use Sesotho terms for the numbers”.

The comments above complemented my initial assessment of T1D’s performance in the intervention, of her assertiveness in improving her facilitative role in the development of reading skills, and of her professional development.

8.7.2 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 20 T2DL6: Seroto sa Tselane (Tselane’ basket)

T2D prepared a lesson on *Seroto sa Tselane* (Tselane’s basket) from the Big Book (GL 1 and 5), and integrated *Shared Reading* and *Guided Group Reading* methodologies in her lesson (GL 3). She introduced her lesson by making learners

aware of the significance of preparing oneself and taking a basketful of food when undertaking a long journey (GL 5). She brought a basket to enhance learning by association (GL 7). She introduced learners to the title of the book *Seroto sa Tselane* (Tselane's basket). Her pronunciation of the sound [tʰ] in *seroto* (basket) was articulated as an aspirated explosive [tʰ].

She introduced the concept of a book to the learners. The book, similar to people, has a name (title) and tells a story. Since the story is long she did not read all of it in class, but only some sections for emphasis. She asked the learners to read after her (GL 1). She introduced sound [d], represented by the letter **d** in words such as *dumela* (to greet/to acknowledge). She then asked learners to give more examples of words which begin with the same letter. She introduced the rhyming words beginning with the syllable **se-** as in *sesepe* (soap) and *seroto* (basket), as well as in *serotong* and *rekiswang*. The sound [ŋ] and the digraph **ng** is a suffix attached at the end of a noun to indicate locality. It is attached at the end of a verb to indicate passive form, e.g., *e rekiswang* (something that is being sold). She also introduced the sight words such as *kgoho* (a chicken), *parafini* (paraffin) and *tswekere* (sugar), which frequently appeared in the story (GL 6). She seemed to have studied in detail the document on “*Phonics and Phonemic awareness for Foundation Phase 2011*” (GL 2). She used examples from the story *Seroto sa Tselane* (Tselane's basket) to indicate rhymes and alliteration, as in **sesepe** (a soap) and **seroto** (a basket), with special focus on the syllable **se**. She also gave examples of rhyming words such as *serotong* (in the basket) and *rekiswang* (something that is being sold) focusing on the sound [ŋ] written as the digraph **ng** (GL 6).

She had trained group leaders to oversee group activities, which made it easy to handle the whole group (GL 9). The learners were then divided into groups and were given different tasks to do while she was busy with the *Guided Group Reading* using the Small Books (GL 1 and 3). Group 1 members were assigned the task of reading about Tselane's song. In Group 2, the leader was assigned the task of reading from the sentence strips what the story was about, and the members were to indicate which sentence appropriately captured the essence of the story. Group 3 members were given the task of rearranging the sentences logically in accordance with how Tselane exchanged the chicken until she found paraffin. The learners gave feedback

of the work they had done. They spoke, listened, read, wrote and answered the teacher's questions using Sesotho (GL 4 and 8).

8.7.2.1 Comments by other participants on Lesson 20: Seroto sa Tselane (Tselane' basket)

The assessors were unanimous that the lesson had been presented very well and that the teacher had demonstrated how to facilitate the development of reading skills. The other participants were impressed with how she integrated Literacy and Numeracy. The values of perseverance and patience were inculcated amongst the learners. The professor appealed to other teachers to emulate T2D in involving learners more and on developing phonemic awareness. The school principal also expressed his appreciation at the way T2D had presented the lesson.

T1D: "The teacher used the resources that were related to the lesson, for example, the basket. She has integrated Mathematics because there is shopping in Numeracy. I liked the fact that she gave the learners an opportunity to see firsthand what a basket looks like as a lot of them are not familiar with it. I think it was noble of her to bring it to the classroom for learners to see".

T4B: "I liked her teaching the learners about values of perseverance".

Prof: "Yes I liked that because the others never really touched on sounds. So please try to involve more learners and try to focus more on the sounds. I think the group leaders took on the challenge very well".

Principal: "I think that overall the lesson was very interesting. She did it in such a way that I wanted her to do more, wanted to listen more. I also want to say that the learners were involved and took part a lot in the lesson".

In presenting her reading lessons, T2D distinguished herself as an invitor and motivator who developed in her learners a passion for reading and love of the books. The learners were motivated to participate actively in the lesson, demonstrating understanding of the content presented. She maintained suspense throughout the lesson while ensuring that the learners were developing their reading skills. The

feeling was contagious since all participants were drawn into her lesson, including the school principal.

8.7.3 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 21 T3DL6: *Ditholwana tse Sehlopha (A bowl of fruit)*

The lesson was presented in a Grade 2 class, was well structured and the presentation progressed from one phase to the next (GL 5). T3D brought some real fruit to the class to help her learners associate the pictures of fruits with the real fruits. She introduced her lesson by asking learners to name the fruit she had in the ice cream container and asked about the significance of eating it. Some learners answered that it kept the body healthy and functioning properly, showing integration between Literacy and Life Skills. She encouraged her learners to use Sesotho words (GL 8).

She did the *picture walk* with her learners, helping them to *predict* what would happen on the next pages of the Big Book (GL 1 & 3), then read a poem, *Nonyana tse hlano* (Five birds) written in the Big Book (GL 1). However, she was not pointing correctly at the words. She asked the learners to recite the poem without drawing any attention to its relevance to the lesson. It appeared as if the learners were unsure of the words in the poem and the teacher made no attempts to guide them to read it properly.

She pasted the flashcards on the chalkboard, which were not legible and asked learners to read them. However, she did not reinforce learning by making use of the poster that she pasted on the board throughout her lesson. She seemed uncertain when she was facilitating the session on developing the plural form (GL 6). She asked the learners what was common to the nouns *ditholwana* (fruit), *diperekisi* (peaches), *dinarikisi* (naartjies/tangerines) and *dipanana* (bananas). They struggled to give the correct answer, but eventually managed to answer that the syllable **di** was common at the beginning of each noun. She then indicated that attaching syllable **di** to the beginning of those nouns showed the plural form. The use of her questioning technique was flawed, as she phrased each question by saying, *Ke mang ya ka mpoellang ... hore le bona eng mo setshwantshong see?* (Who can tell me ... what

do you see in this picture?). Although this was a Grade 2 class, the learners still answered in single words, like *panana* (banana), and *lamunu* (orange). T3D's performance indicated that she still needed further guidance and assistance in developing her learners' reading skills.

During *Guided Group Reading* (GL 3), some learners still struggled to point correctly to the words they were reading while others hid the words with their hands. The correct posture and how to page through the book were not emphasised. The other groups of learners were given an activity to fill in the missing morphemes from the shopping list provided. T3D's lesson showed integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (GL 4), nonetheless, she still needed further guidance in integrating thinking and reasoning as well as language use and structure in her lessons.

8.7.3.1 Comments by other participants on Lesson 20: *Ditholwana tse sehlopha* (A bowl of fruit)

During the mini-conference held at the end of Day 1 of the workshop, the other participants refrained from commenting, perhaps they do not frequently engage in peer assessment. Commenting on T3B's lesson presentation, T1D said: "*Titjhere o phethahaditse thuto ya hae ka bokgabane. O ne a tlisitse ditholwana ka phaposing, a ba a botsa baithuti hore na hobaneng ba ja ditholwana*". [The teacher presented the lesson very well. She brought some real fruit to the classroom and asked them why they eat fruit.]

Although T3D had been an active member in my study her performance in Spiral Cycle 3 showed little evidence of improving her facilitative role in the development of her learners' reading skills.

8.7.4 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 22 T1BL6: *Lelapa leso* (My family)

The lesson was thoroughly prepared (GL 5), with the teacher starting by organizing learners around her so that they could all see the Big Book (GL 1). She introduced her lesson by doing a *picture walk* (GL 3), orientating the learners to the members of

a family, such as *mme* (mother) and *ntate* (father), who appeared on the front page of the Big Book (GL 7). She refrained from using words characteristic of home unspecialised knowledge, such as *mamane* for *mmangwane* (aunt) or *abuti* for *moholwane* (elder brother). She then gradually introduced the linguistic concept *botona le botshehadi* (feminine and masculine gender) (GL 7&8), focussing on vocabulary development of words related to family members, such as *moena* (younger brother), *moholwane* (elder brother) and *kgaitsemi* (sister).

She then gave learners different tasks to do while she was busy with *Guided Group Reading* (GL 3). Group 1 selected words from the word cards indicating feminine and masculine gender. They pasted those onto a page with a diagram of a tree. They wrote the nouns indicating masculine gender on the left of the tree and those indicating feminine gender on the right (GL 4&6). Group 2 members were given a crossword puzzle to help them to recognise and name letters. They had to fill in the missing letters in order to complete the words (GL 6). Group 3 were given syllables which they had to combine with other syllables in order to form the names of family members (GL 6). Through this activity they demonstrated the repeating CV syllable structure of Sesotho words, such as *ntatemoholo* (grandfather) which was segmented as: n + ta+ te + mo +ho +lo.

The learners who were busy with *Guided Group Reading* read from the Small Books and were given individual attention (GL 1 and 3). The teacher utilised her group leaders, which helped to maintain discipline during group activities (GL 9). The learners gave feedback on completion of the activities. This was evidence that learners understood the content presented and had benefitted from the intervention. The only major flaw that I commented on in all the lessons presented at School B was the omission of the introduction.

Researcher: "I miss the introduction. This is what I wanted to say to you. Have you noticed they go straight to *picture walk*? I am worried about that. You need to have an introduction".

The teachers defended themselves for not starting their lessons with an introduction, claiming that their Learning Facilitator trained them to go straight to *picture walk*. T2B

insisted that they were following her instructions. However, the HoD acknowledged that it was an omission on their part. T1D's performance showed her thoroughness in improving her facilitative role in the development of reading skills in the way she implemented the guidelines.

8.7.4.1 Comments by other participants on Lesson 22: Lelapa leso (My family)

All the participants agreed that T1B's lesson was thoroughly prepared and well presented. The others were impressed with the activities she assigned to the group of learners. T1B helped the learners to discover new knowledge about the family members, such as gender, a new understanding reinforced by the class activities. The comments included the following:

HoD: *"Lesson ya T1B ke ratile diactivities tsa hae. Ke ratile because le those learners bao re ba bitsang hore they are struggling, diactivity tseo a ba fileng tsona I think T1B ha a robala, ekare o ne a tlo fuwa dimarks, a tlo critique, ke hore lesson ya hae it was perfect".* [I liked the group activities in T1B's lesson. I liked them because they catered even for the struggling learners. I think T1B did not sleep at all. It is like she awarded some marks, it was like a critique lesson, her lesson was perfect.]

Prof: *It was challenging and the learners have a feeling of accomplishment.*

T2D: *E ntho e nngwe eo ke e ratileng haholo lesseneng ya T1B ke ha a ne a kena di grouping tsa hae, o ne a arrangile digroup tsa hae hantle. Ke bone a sebedisa dileader tsa hae, each and every group e ne ena le leader and a e sebedisa. Ho tloha moo ke ratile ha a bua ka diexclamation marks ke hore a seke a bala feela a tsebe hore ho na la comma hona le matshwao a mang a se ke a bala feela.* [I liked the way T1B arranged her groups when doing the group activities. The group leaders were actually doing their work. Moreover, I liked the part where she made learners aware of the exclamation mark used in a sentence and what it means. I liked the way she explained the use of other punctuation marks].

The comments reinforce my assessment of T1B's overall performance as very good, and are an indication that through the implementation of the intervention she empowered herself and accommodated her learners.

8.7.5 Comments on the implementation of guidelines in Lesson 23 T2BL6: *Dikarolo tsa Selemo (Seasons of the year)*

Except for the introduction, the lesson was well prepared, showing the developmental phases (GL 5). T2B had prepared the Big Book and the Small Books (GL 1) and started her lesson directly by means of a *picture walk* (GL 3). She insisted that learners use Sesotho words and answer questions in full sentences (GL 8). She integrated the language skills, including thinking and reasoning, effectively by continuously asking the *why* and *how* questions (GL 4). She then gave learners different tasks to perform while she was busy with *Guided Group Reading* (GL 3). Group 1 answered questions based on the story while Group 2 constructed words using letter cards (GL 6). The learners who were busy with *Guided Group Reading* read from the Small Books and were given individual attention (GL 1).

8.7.5.1 Comments by other participants on Lesson 22: *Dikarolo tsa Selemo (Seasons of the year)*

The assessors were unanimous that T2B's lesson had been well prepared and structured, however, the HoD cautioned her to be sensitive towards the learners' responses. When a learner mentions an English word, she should acknowledge to the learner that, for instance, blue is an English word, instead of saying that the colour blue does not exist in Sesotho. She could then ask the learner to give the word in Sesotho, e.g., *botala ba lehodimo* (blue). At our mini-conference a lengthy debate ensued about the omission of the introduction. The HoD acknowledged that every lesson should have an introduction and promised that the teachers would improve on that.

HoD: *I liked T2B's lesson very much. What I liked most is.... I heard T2B saying to one of her learners that "no, not blue but ke mang ya ka mo thusang?" "Who can help her?" I think Mrs. T2B should have said "Yes, ke blue ka English, in Sesotho re tla re ke mang? [...She should have acknowledged that the colour is blue in English and then ask the name of that colour in Sesotho...".What do we call the colour blue in Sesotho?...She also did Life Skill, it was Sotho lesson, but she also did Life Skill because there was some instance where she said learners *Re a fofonela* (We sniff). Those are the senses of smell. She also did Mathematics.]*

The professor commented on her good handwriting on the board, which was an example to the learners. She also noted how T2B's learners responded to the questions by using full sentences, a practice that prepared them to develop a sense of syntax at early stages and encourage understanding. The activities assigned to the learners also prepared them for answering comprehension passages.

8.7.6 Reflections on Lesson 24 T3BL6: *Ditholwana tse Sehlopha* (A bowl of fruit)

Although T3B had presented the same lesson in the previous cycles, in Spiral Cycle 3 she showed some improvement in the way she prepared her lesson, media, and general classroom management and discipline (GL 5). With the learners seated on the carpet she mounted the Big Book on the wooden stand, allowing each to have a good view of the Big Book (GL 1), unlike in the previous lessons when she would hold it in her hands and try to point at the same time. She was in control, not in an authoritarian way but one that maintained order in the classroom. The lesson showed a smooth progression from one phase to the next. The *picture walk* was very short and to the point, allowing her to focus on other aspects of the lesson (GL 3). She then linked the pictures of fruit in the Big Book by showing the learners real fruit that she had brought along. She further reinforced their understanding by using flashcards to show the relationship between the word *nngwe* (one) and the numeral 1, showing integration between Literacy and Numeracy. She then asked learners to recall from the story a fruit that could be associated with the word *nngwe* (one) and the numeral 1, the word *pedi* (two) and the numeral 2, until she got to ten.

She wrote the names of the different fruits on the board, in Sesotho, emphasising singular and plural forms e.g., *lamunu* (an orange) and *dilamunu* (oranges) (GL 6 and 8). In this way she also controlled her pronunciation. Although she tried hard to curb the influence of Setswana in her pronunciation, she still made an error in the pronunciation of the adjectival phrase *ha di le ngata* (when there are many fruits). She said "*ha di le di ngata*", adding another adjectival prefix **di**, making the second one superfluous in the phrase. She read with her learners the singular and the plural forms of the words she wrote on the board (GL 6). Her chalkboard writing was very good and the learners took on the example as they wrote in their books.

She assigned differentiated tasks to groups of learners according to their abilities so that she could focus on *Guided Group Reading* (GL 3). During this session the learners role-played reading. The learners in Group 1 matched the picture of fruit with the name of the fruit, however this activity was written in English in the copies provided to the learners. Nonetheless, the activity was relevant to the theme. Group 2 filled in the missing letters in the names of the different fruit. This activity helped learners to recognise and name letters of the alphabet. In Group 3 learners copied the names of the fruit onto their books. In *Guided Group Reading*, she helped learners to read from the Small Books (GL 1), focusing on pointing correctly and observing punctuation marks. There was integration of language skills as well as writing and handwriting (GL 4).

8.7.6.1 Reflections by other participants on Lesson 23: Ditholwana tse Sehlopha (A bowl of fruit)

T3B's lesson presentation seemed good to those who had not observed her initial lessons. She implemented most of the guidelines and for me her performance was an embodiment of tenacity, willingness to succeed and determination to learn and improve. In addition, she took an initiative to organise a carpet for her learners to sit on, instead of standing around her in front of the classroom. This practice helped her to maintain discipline and was a relief to the learners. The HoD was impressed with this and suggested the teachers from School D join forces in recommending to the principals the purchase of carpets for the Foundation Phases classes. She commented as follows:

HoD: "*One other thing, eo e leng hore le tshwanetse ho e etsa lona ba School D ke (this carpet thing) ha le etsa reading, e monate. Ke hore if re ka bua le diprincipal tsa rona hore ba re rekele dicarpet for Foundation Phase*". [The one other thing that I think School D teachers must adopt is the 'use of carpets' when reading. I think it is great and we must just talk to the school principals to buy us carpets for the Foundation Phase.]

While the HoD saw the necessity to suggest that the school principals buy the carpets for reading corners, the suggestion should be accompanied by a strong

motivation also to buy reading books for the learners. This would make reading corners exciting.

8.7.7 Comments on the implementation of guidelines on Lesson 25 T4BL5: *Re ferefa ka mebala (We paint)*

T4B did not take part in Spiral Cycle 2 because she was writing exams. Due to time constraints she did not have enough time to prepare a new theme for Spiral Cycle 3. Instead of absconding we asked that she prepare any theme that she had presented in the previous lessons. However, it must show integration of *Guided Group Reading* and *Shared Reading* as well as the development of phonemic awareness and word recognition. T4B presented her lesson on the theme *Re ferefa ka mebala (We paint)*, a theme which She had already dealt with in Lessons 11 and 12 but now with the content and focus reshuffled so as to ensure that it was not repeated exactly too closely. She redesigned the classroom setting and organised a reading corner with a carpet for her learners to sit on during *Shared Reading* and *Guided Group Reading*.

Her introduction to the lesson was very good, which was an achievement for her, considering that the teachers at School B were not used to preparing a lesson introduction. She introduced her lesson by asking learners about the colours of the traffic lights and their significance for the pedestrians. She then asked the learners to identify a traffic light from one of the posters on the wall. Before starting with the *picture walk* and *predicting* (GL 3) she orientated the learners to the Big Book, its title and contents (GL 1).

As she was busy with the *picture walk* she insisted that learners respond in full sentences and name the colours in Sesotho (GL 8). However, the interference of Setswana was still prevalent, e.g., she referred to black as *montsho* instead of *motsho*. The learners counted the number of colours painted on the South African flag, showing integration between *Literacy* and *Numeracy*. She strengthened their understanding of the colours by asking them to point, for example, to a colour green in the classroom. She asked learners where they usually saw the South African flag. The learners mentioned places such as the school, police stations, national sport

events and when the president of a country has died. The learners responded very well to the teacher's questions.

She then requested one group to remain sitting on the carpet while the others returned to their chairs. Each group member had a Small Book (GL 1) and she did *Guided Group Reading* (GL 3) with those seated on the carpet. She focused on helping learners to point to and pronounce words correctly, and pause at the relevant punctuation marks. The group returned to their tables and coloured in the flag while the other grouped coloured in the traffic light. They wrote the names of the colours they had painted in Sesotho (GL 8).

8.7.7.1 *Comments by other participants on Lesson 25: Re ferefa ka mebala (We paint)*

The assessors were unanimous that the lesson had been well presented:

Researcher: *“Ke ratile ntho ya dicarpet. T4B o e sebedisitse ke bone ele ntho e ntle. Le taba ya hore ke ne ke bona baithuti ba ema nako e telele haholo. So carpet e ya thusa haholo. O kgona ho ba controlla, e solva discipline problems tse ngata haholo”.* [It is not only the carpet that is the issue here. T4B also used the carpet for her lesson and I liked it. The carpet also helps curb the problem of learners having to stand for a long period during reading. It helps with control and assists in maintaining discipline in class.]

The other teachers from School D also picked up the frequency of Setswana words used by T4B. Even when the words were written in Sesotho she still pronounced them in Setswana. This comment was captured in this quote:

T3D: *“Leha nako eo a e balang e ngotswe motsho empa yena o e badile e le montsho.* [She read it wrongly as *montsho* (black) even when the Sesotho spelling was correct].

The HoD was impressed with T4B for giving her learners information about the Big Books:

HoD: *“E, ke e ratile because o tshwanetse hore o ba indicatele hore this is a Big Book hore ba bone the difference between a Big Book and a Small Book. Ke nahana hore o ne a etsa yona introduction”.* [Yes, I liked that part because you have to

indicate to the learners that this is a Big Book and a Small Book for them to see the difference. I think it was her way of introducing the lesson.].

Although T4B informed her learners about the Big Books, the impact was not the same as for T2D. The teachers must take the example set by T2D in creating a love of books.

8.7.8 An overview of the implementation of guidelines in Spiral Cycle 3

Spiral Cycle 3 was the highlight of the intervention, with the teachers having prepared thoroughly for it and seemingly having the support of the SMTs. They appeared confident, motivated and excited, as were their learners.

In Spiral Cycle 3, I did not give a summary of each lesson presented as I did in the other spiral cycles. I had observations and reflections together so that I could include other participants' reflections. This was because the teachers were accustomed to the structure of the lesson presentations based on the developmental phases and how to apply the guidelines. Another reason was that the lesson presentations would culminate in a mini-conference to reflect on the day's proceedings and to give constructive feedback to the teachers.

The teachers showed improvement in many aspects. T1D, T2D and T1B took initiative to plan lessons on new themes they had not presented before, showcasing their confidence and broadening their learners' semantic, syntactic, graphophonic and world knowledge. In Spiral Cycle 1 and 2 it surfaced that the learners' graphophonic knowledge was still under-developed, creating a challenge for teachers to focus more on designing activities that would develop learners' phonemic awareness (Chapters 2:2.2.3.1). However, the teachers' understanding of how to develop phonemic awareness was at a rudimentary level. For instance, T1D had an opportunity to develop the learners' phonemic awareness of digraphs and trigraphs which start with the letter **t** in words such as ***tsamaya*** (to go) and ***tjhaka*** (to visit). T2D and T1B did engage their learners in activities that helped learners develop phonemic awareness, thus helping them demonstrate the achievement of ASs.

The learners were engaged in various activities which showed the integration of the skills, including writing and handwriting (Chapter 4:4.2.3). In so doing, the teachers were demonstrating effective application of GL 4 and adhering to the imperatives of the FfLC and the CAPS. In allocating differentiated activities, they were taking into cognizance that their learners' developmental levels varied and that they required differentiated support and stimulation.

In Spiral Cycle 3, the teachers had an opportunity to learn from one another how they implemented the guidelines and what lessons they could take back to further improve their facilitative role in the development of reading skills.

8.7.9 Rating the teachers' performance in Spiral Cycle 3

In Spiral Cycle 3, I rated the teachers' participation in the intervention based on their performance in implementing the guidelines. I also considered the participants' comments. I rated them according to the same scale used in Spiral Cycle 1 and 2.

Table 8.4: Rating teachers' performance in Spiral Cycle 3 of the intervention

GUIDELINES	RATING	T1D	T2D	T3D	T1B	T2B	T3B	T4B
Using the Big and Small Books: GL 1	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	5	5	3	5	4	4	4
Reading policy documents: GL 2	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	4	5	3	4	3	3	3
Applying reading methodologies and strategies:GL 3	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	5	5	3	5	4	4	4
Integrating different language skills: GL 4	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	5	5	3	5	4	4	4
Planning, preparing and presenting lessons: GL 5	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	5	5	3	5	5	4	4
Developing phonemic awareness: GL 6	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	5	5	2	5	4	4	4
Balancing between HK and SK: GL 7	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	5	5	3	5	4	3	4
Using Sesotho HL: GL 8	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	5	5	3	5	5	3	3
Handling large classes: GL 9	1. 2. 3. 4. 5	5	5	3	5	5	4	4

The ratings indicate a steady improvement in the ways the selected Grade 1 teachers facilitated the development of reading skills of their learners. T1D, T2D and T1B were motivated and committed to improving their facilitative role in developing

the learners' reading skills. Consequently, their performance in implementing the guidelines was balanced and holistic. They received the highest rating of 5 in implementing the guidelines. However, they had to maintain the momentum and nurture the good practices they acquired in the study. They needed to improve on reading policy documents so that they continued to broaden their curriculum knowledge. T2D received a rating of 5 in implementing GL 2.

T2B also showed a balanced performance but still had to improve on reading policy documents and on being consistent with lesson preparation. A problem with T2B lay in her inability to apply the newly acquired knowledge for long, since she would soon be going on retirement. In Spiral Cycle 3, T3B and T4B's performance improved greatly, however, they still had to focus on minimising Setswana mother tongue interference and start building up their Sesotho vocabulary. T3B's development was inspirational, as she exerted herself as a lifelong learner in my study. T3D's performance showed little improvement, covering the basics every teacher would and showing lack of stimulation.

8.8 CONCLUDING THE INTERVENTION

In concluding the intervention, the teachers wrote the *post-intervention test* (Appendix H) at the end of the proceedings on Day 2 of the workshop on Assessment of the implementation of the guidelines. Some of the questions which were asked in the *pre-intervention test* (Appendix G) were repeated in the *post-intervention test*. In the post-intervention test, Question 1 tested the teachers' understanding of curriculum concepts. Question 2 focused on testing their understanding of the concepts 'reading' and 'reading process'. The last question tested their understanding of sounds and structure of Sesotho syllables and words. The reflections on the *post-intervention test* are discussed in detail in Chapter 9 (9.2).

The teachers were also required to submit journals. Earlier on, in this chapter 8.5.13, I had requested them to keep journals which included the detailed lesson plans of the four lessons observed during the spiral cycles, learners' activities of the four lessons observed, weekly plans from week: 1st- 5th August 2011 until the 17th -21st October

2011, each teacher's professional development growth (PDG) report and each teacher's assessment forms for the lessons presented by their colleagues (6 each).

The lesson plans were supposed to provide some evidence of the teachers' action in improving their facilitative role in the development of their learners' reading skills. The significance of lesson planning was discussed at length in Chapter 7 (7.2.6). The inclusion of Guideline 5 was, therefore, intended to encourage the teachers to have a complete written lesson plan on the day when I observed their presentations. I had also requested them to submit their weekly plans so that I could assess how they facilitated the development of reading skills on the days when I was not physically at the schools to monitor them. The rationale was to assess whether the implementation of the guidelines contributed towards the teachers' empowerment and whether they had taken ownership of the process of improving their facilitative role in the development of their learners' reading skills. The teachers also improved on the quality of written activities they presented to the learners. The activities became more advanced during Spiral Cycle 2 and 3. Since the teachers had given learners differentiated activities to develop their reading skills, I also requested them to append those activities in the journal.

In their PDG reports, the teachers were also expected to reflect on how the intervention helped or did not help them to improve their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. This information would indicate their professional developmental growth and how far they maintained the balance between the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of their levels of functioning. The teachers' PDG reports were supposed to partly describe their own improvement in facilitating the development of reading skills developed in their affective domain. The reports would also provide evidence as to how they empowered themselves through their participation in my study. The importance of maintaining this balance was emphasised in Chapter 7 (7.2.2).

During Spiral Cycle 3, all the seven teachers had an opportunity to assess one another (Chapter 8:8.7). Each teacher needed six forms to assess the lessons presented by their colleagues. The teachers used a template similar to the one they used for their own lesson plans. In the assessment space is provided for comments

regarding how each teacher presented her lesson (Chapter 7:7.2.6). I requested the teachers to keep the assessment forms in their journals.

The journals were supposed to be submitted in November 2011, to give the teachers extended time to complete them. However, the teachers reported that they were kept busy with examinations, marking, compiling schedules and writing the learners' academic reports. Eventually I received the journals during the first week of December 2011, which delayed the analysis of those journals.

8.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has illustrated how the intervention, already initiated in Cycle 1, was further developed into Cycle 2 and its spiral cycles. It pivoted on the formulation, adoption and implementation of the guidelines, first implemented in Spiral Cycle 1, revealing the areas that required urgent attention. At the end of each spiral cycle, I tracked the teachers' progress by rating their performance.

Through the reflective process, at the end of Spiral Cycle 1, a new plan of action was determined, which entailed improving the implementation of the guidelines enacted in Spiral Cycle 2, involving, for example, the application of *Guided Reading* and assigning of differentiated activities to enhance learner participation. Due to time constraints, it was not feasible to develop another spiral cycle where teachers could apply *Group Reading* and *Independent Reading* in facilitating the development of reading skills. As part of the ongoing reflections, Spiral Cycle 2 resulted in a plan to assess the implementation of the guidelines which took place in Spiral Cycle 3. The teachers had an opportunity to assess one another, to be assessed by a representative of the SMT from each school and by the professor from the University of the Free State.

In the next chapter I reflect on the intervention of the study.

CHAPTER 9

REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERVENTION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter underlines my role as a researcher in this study, separate from the practitioners and their life worlds. My intention herein is to reflect on how the teachers improved their facilitative role in the development of their learners' reading skills based on their performance in the *post-intervention test*, their journals and the epiphanic moments. The insights emerging from the reflections provide evidence of the teachers' improvement in their facilitative role in the development of reading skills

9.2 REFLECTING ON THE POST- INTERVENTION TEST

The teachers performed better in the *post-intervention test* (Table 9.1) as compared to their performance in the *pre-intervention test* (Table 8.1). However, some of them still did not perform well in answering some of the questions. Their poor performance points to the fact that resolving the problems in facilitating the development of reading skills needs a multifaceted approach and more stringent mechanisms to be put in place. Table 9.1 (below) indicates the marks obtained by the teachers in each question.

Table 9.1: The teachers' performance in the *post-intervention test*

Focus areas	Question 1: Concepts					Question 2: Reading processes				Question 3: Sounds and structure of words						Mark	%
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6		
Q																30	100
T1D	1½	1½	2	2	1	2	2½	1	1	2	1½	Na	Na	0	2	20	66.7
T2D	2	2	½	1	1	0	2½	1	0	2	0	0	Na	na	na	12	40
T3D	1	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	1	0	1	Na	na	1	9½	31.7
T1B	1	½	1	2	1	1	2½	0	1	2	Na	2	0	0	2	15	50
T2B	1	2	½	2	1	0	2½	0	2	2	2	1	0	0	2	18	60
T3B	1	1	½	1	1	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	2	14½	48.3
T4B	½	1½	1	1	0	1	2	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	2	13	43.3

Key: na = teacher gave no answer

Interpretation of Table 9.1 is helped by making reference to Table 8.1 (Chapter 8:8.2.1), and illustrates that in answering most questions the teachers improved on their performance in the *pre-intervention test*. Some, such as 1.4, 2.2 and 3.1 were correctly answered, reaching an average mark of 14.6 (48.7%) in contrast to the 5.4 (18%) recorded in the *pre-intervention test* (Table 8.1). The average mark of the *post-intervention test* clearly indicates that teachers now had a better understanding of some of the key concepts used in the NCS and CAPS policy documents. They also seemed to understand better what the concepts 'reading' and 'reading process' entailed. For instance, T1D maintained her satisfactory performance in both the *pre-intervention test* 15.5/30 (51.7%) and post-intervention test 20/30 (66.7%), indicating her assertiveness in improving her practice and her facilitative role in the development of her learners' reading skills. T2B showed a remarkable improvement from a 3/30 mark (10%) in the pre-intervention test to 18/30 (60%) in the *post-intervention test*, whilst T1B increased her performance from 7.5/30 (25%) to a 15/30 (50%). Although T2D performed very well in the lesson presentations, her performance in the *post-intervention test* proved otherwise. She scored a disappointing 12/30 (40%) in the post-intervention test. Nonetheless, it was an improvement from 3.5/30 (11.7%) she had obtained in the *pre-intervention test*. T3B

did not submit her answer sheet in the *pre-intervention test*, so I recorded a 0/30 mark for her. However, T3B had shown a steady improvement during the intervention, as shown by her satisfactory performance in the *post-intervention test* 14.5/30 (48.3%). Although T3D showed an improvement, her overall performance was still unsatisfactory.

Most teachers failed to answer Questions 2.1, 2.3 and 2.4 well, evidently still not understanding the significance of prior learning in developing the learners' reading skills. Neither did they understand the significance of learning how to read in one's home language. Question 3, with special reference to 3.4 and 3.5, still presented a challenge for some of the teachers in spite of the frequency in which they used the Sesotho CV syllable structure and the CVCV structure of Sesotho words when facilitating the development of reading skills during the intervention. Surprisingly, the teachers from School B performed better than those from School D in questions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.6, indicating improved understanding of the practice. However, it is apparent that the teachers still need further support and assistance in this regard.

The results of triangulating between the *post-intervention test*, the workshop in Chapter 7 and the lesson presentations in Chapter 8 show correlation in improvement of how the teachers use Sesotho. A better understanding of the concepts and selection of appropriate Sesotho words during lesson presentation and in the tests helped to improve sentence construction. When I was marking the *post-intervention test*, there were no traces of English words in their answers. Their sentences were meaningful, showing a logical presentation of facts, which means that there was improvement in understanding the Sesotho concepts and how to use them. The teachers' improved performance in the *post-intervention test* provides evidence that they were becoming confident to use Sesotho as HL and as LoLT. Their confidence also showed in the way they improved on their handwriting, which was more legible than in the *pre-intervention test*. This supports the notion that the implementation of Guideline 8 contributed positively towards enhancing the teachers' language use in Sesotho (Chapter 8: 8.2.2).

The improvements noted here attest that teachers were well on their way to improving their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. However, such

improvements also indicate that the teachers still require further support and guidance to understand and improve the theory underlying the development of reading skills.

9.3 REFLECTIONS ON THE TEACHERS' JOURNALS

In reflecting on the teachers' journals, I employed triangulation in order to determine any correlations between the findings which emerged from the lesson presentations (observations) and the new insights emerging from the journals to support the finding that the teachers had indeed improved on their facilitative role in the development of reading skills.

The process of triangulation revealed a discrepancy between the teachers' lesson presentations (practical component) and the lesson plans (theoretical component) in facilitating the development of reading skills. Although the teachers' performance was very good in implementing the guidelines, their theoretical knowledge base on the significance of lesson planning proved otherwise (Chapter 4:4.7). It was disheartening to realise that most had not submitted all the lesson plans for the three spiral cycles, and a disappointment that none had included the weekly plans in their journals. Most teachers responded positively to the request to keep the learners' activities in journals and submit them as expected, however, some did not comply with this requirement.

The lesson presentations described in Chapter 8 (8.5; 8.6; 8.7) of Spiral Cycles 1, 2 and 3, provide evidence of how the teachers showed a gradual but steady improvement in their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. However, in triangulating between the workshop in chapter 7 (7.2.2) and a high level of motivation I observed as the teachers presented their lessons in Chapter 8 (8.7.8), made me aware that there was little evidence from their journals indicating how their affective domain improved or how it was influenced by the implementation of the guidelines. None submitted a professional developmental growth report. In considering a possibility that teachers did not have enough time to write their professional developmental growth reports I returned to the teachers and asked them to write the

report in May 2012. Table 9.2 (below) shows requirements of the journal and how the teachers met them.

Table 9.2: The requirements of the teachers’ journals

Items in the journal	Lesson plans			Learner written activities			Assessment forms	Weekly plans	Reflection on project
	SC 1	SC 2	SC 3	SC 1	SC 2	SC 3	SC 3		
T1B (J4)	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	6	X	X
T2B (J3)	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	6	X	X
T3B (J2)	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	6	X	X
T4B (J7)	✓	A	X	✓	A	✓	3	X	X
T1D (J1)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	4	X	X
T2D (J5)	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	6	X	X
T3D (J6)	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	2	X	X

Key: = submitted, X = did not submit and A = absent

9.3.1 Reflections on the lesson plans

Table 9.2 (above) shows that six of the teachers met the requirements of the journal and adhered to GL 5 of my intervention, which was to use the lesson plan template to plan and present the lesson showing progression of the developmental phases of the lesson. T3D did not submit her lesson plan. In triangulating between her lesson presentations (8.6.3; 8.7.3) and her journal, I noted some correlation in her lack of motivation to improve her facilitative role in the development of reading skills. She made too many mistakes in her last lesson presentation in Spiral Cycle 3, which is an indication that she did not expend much effort into her lesson planning and preparation (Chapter 8:8.5.12.1).

T1D and T3B submitted the three lessons plans of Spiral Cycles 1, 2 and 3. In attaching their lesson plans to the journal, I was able to triangulate and noticed the correlation between their lesson plans and how they presented the lessons. T1D’s lessons plans were evidence that her lesson presentations were a true reflection of her lesson plans. They were well thought-out, well structured and showed all the necessary details contained in the lesson plan template (Chapter 8:8.5.1.1), indicating effective implementation of GL 5. She was the only one who gave

examples of the questions she had asked throughout the phases of the lesson, activities that learners were engaged in and the new sounds she had introduced to the learners. Nonetheless, I noticed some flaws in her lesson plans, for instance she did not write her reflections at the end of the lesson, an indication for support in that aspect. Some parts of the lesson plan of Spiral Cycle 3 were written in English, which explains the use of some of the English words when she was presenting her lesson. She repeatedly used the words June sixteen (16) when referring to the *Youth Day*, rather than the Sesotho words (*la 16 Phupjane*) (Chapter 8: 8.7.1).

Given the background of how T3B developed in my study it was an accomplishment to see her name ranking alongside T1D, who submitted the lesson plans for the three spiral cycles. This provides evidence that T3B's involvement in my study developed her for the better and that she empowered herself in the process. Nonetheless, T3B's lesson plans did not include some information reflected in the lesson template form, such as the theme, situation analysis, or making provision for Inclusive Education, the skills, attitudes and values for which she addressed in her reflection on the lesson. Perhaps this explains why she struggled with the lesson structure when she was presenting her lessons in Spiral Cycles 1 and 2 (Chapter 8:8.5.8.1; GL 5). In spite of that, the sections that she addressed in the lesson plans were detailed. In her lesson plan for Spiral Cycle 1, she had a lesson introduction, which correlated with how she presented it in class (Chapter 8:8.5.8). The introduction was missing in the second lesson plan of Spiral Cycle 2, which she apparently erased. Perhaps she doubted whether she was doing it correctly or not. In the third lesson plan, of Spiral Cycle 3, she started her lesson with a *picture walk*, similar to that carried out by her colleagues.

T1B and T2B did not submit their lesson plans for Spiral Cycle 1, but submitted the two for Spiral Cycles 2 and 3. T1B's lesson plans were well structured, providing the necessary details in all the sections of the lesson. It was good that she completed the section on the reflections of the lessons as she indicated how her emotional wellness influenced her presentations of each lesson. Some sections of the lesson plan for Spiral Cycle 2 were, however, written in English, which defeated the purpose of Guideline 8 in the study, which is to use Sesotho HL in facilitating the development of

their learners' reading skills. Nonetheless, there was improvement in the use of Sesotho words in her lesson plan for Spiral Cycle 3.

T2B consistently used Sesotho HL in presenting her lessons and in writing her lesson plans. In employing triangulation, I noticed a good correlation between lesson plans and her lessons presentations. She also included her reflective comments. Although T2B distinguished herself from the other teachers by asking the *why* and *how* questions during the lesson presentations, she did not give examples of those questions in her lesson plans. The implication is that she still needs guidance on how to plan her lesson and specifically to provide a few examples of the type of questions she would ask. In reflecting between lesson presentation and the written lessons plans of T1B and T2B, I picked up a discrepancy. The two teachers confuse *picture walk* with the introduction which means that they still need clarity on the two aspects to further improve their facilitative role in developing their learners' reading skills.

T4B and T2D submitted only one lesson plan each for Spiral Cycle 1. Although T4B did not participate in Spiral 2 due to writing her exams, she participated in Spiral Cycles 1 and 3. She did not submit a lesson plan for Spiral Cycle 3 because she was reluctant to participate in that cycle, explaining that she was not well prepared and had missed the opportunity to take part in Spiral Cycle 2 due to her examinations. I therefore encouraged her to repeat one of the lessons she had previously presented instead of absconding. In spite of her situation, T4B showed improvement in the way she facilitated the development of reading skills. In Spiral Cycle 3, she introduced her lesson very well (Chapter 8:8.7.7), evidently, aware of the significance of a lesson introduction.

T2D was one of the teachers who consistently presented well-structured lessons (Chapter 8:8.5.2.1), and in Spiral Cycle 1 she presented two lessons for Grades 1 and 2 classes. She competently adjusted the theme on *Re a bopa* (We are constructing) to the level of the Grades 1 and 2 learners respectively (Chapter 8.5.2; 8.5.3). Evidently, she was demonstrating that she could easily handle different grades at the Foundation Phase (FP) but it was a disappointment that she submitted only one lesson plan for Spiral Cycle 1. In the only lesson plan that she attached with the journal she had completed many sections in the lesson template form. In

triangulating between her lesson plan her lesson presentations and the pre- and post-intervention tests, (Chapter 8:8.5.2; 8.6.2), I noticed a discrepancy in her performance. The results indicate that while she excelled in the practical component of facilitating the development of reading skills her performance in the theoretical component was disappointing. Evidently, she and the other teachers, whose theoretical knowledge was poor, need more guidance and support in improving.

9.3.1.1 Insights emerging from reflecting on the teachers' lesson plans

My reflections on the teachers' lesson plans indicate a serious problem in this aspect of facilitating the development of reading skills. The following discussion highlights areas of concern:

a) Common problems identified in lesson planning

Lesson planning was discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 7 (4:4.7; 7:7.2.6), the purpose being to make teachers aware of its importance as one of the significant aspects contributing to the facilitation of the development of reading skills. The efforts made to orientate teachers apparently did not sufficiently address the issue, and the findings from the journals reveal that problems still persist, which could have necessitated another spiral cycle if I had unlimited time at my disposal. The following are some of the common problems pertinent to lesson planning, which retard the improvement of the facilitative role of the teachers in the development of reading skills in Sesotho:

- Lack of understanding of some concepts (*ho hloka kutlwisiso ha mareo a sebediswang bakeng sa ho hlophisa thuto*):
 - Some teachers were unable to differentiate between the lesson theme (*mmokotaba wa thuto*) and the aim of the lesson (*sepheo sa thuto*), and used them interchangeably. Most did not have knowledge of how to use active verbs in the formulation of objectives.
 - Some teachers did not understand the importance of including the situation analysis (*hlwaya maemo a boithuti*). Issues such as overcrowding, absenteeism and lack of resources may have had a negative impact on the development of the lesson. In taking cognisance of such variables the teacher would have been able to plan accordingly.

- Sometimes integration of language skills (*momahano ya bokgoni ba ho ithuta*) was confused with integration of Literacy with Numeracy and Life Skills.
- Most teachers could not enumerate some of the strategies they used to facilitate the reading skills and the ones used by their learners.
- Inconsistency in planning of a lesson introduction (*ho hloka ho tsepama mabapi le ho hlophisa selelekela sa thuto*): The teachers from School D understood the significance of a lesson introduction and planned it well. T3B and T4B also had an idea of what a lesson introduction entailed. On the contrary, T1B and T2B used the strategy *picture walk* as an introduction.
- Lack of alignment between the components of the lesson (*ho se bontshe momahano ya dintlha tsa thuto*): In Spiral Cycle 1, some teachers struggled with understanding that the lesson theme determines the aims, objectives, teachers and learner activities so that the theme is maintained throughout the developmental phases of lesson.
- Poor formulation of teacher and learner activities and assessment in the lesson plan (*ho bontsha bofokodi mabapi le ho ngola diketso tsa ho ruta le ho ithuta le tekanyetso*): The teachers prepared a variety of activities which learners did, yet those were not written in their lesson plans. Most made use of phrases such as *ho bala* (to read), *ho ngola* (to write), *ho bua* (to speak), without giving any details.
- Misunderstanding of the concept *conclusion* (*ho hloka kutlwisiso ka lereo qetelo*): This section is frequently confused with homework.
- Lack of ability to reflect on the lesson (*ho se bokgoni ba ho thuisa dintlha tsa thuto*): Only two teachers had reflections, and it is inexplicable why the others did not write theirs. In their weekly plans, the last section requires them to write their reflections.
- Reluctance to write in full sentences (*ho bontsha monyebe ho ngola dipolelo tse felletseng*): Teachers predominantly used phrases and rarely gave examples of the questions they were going to ask or the activities the learners would be doing (Chapter 8:8.2). T1D tried to write in full sentences.

The problems identified above show correlation between the concerns raised by the teachers in the in-depth situation analysis regarding lesson planning (Chapter 6:6.2.2; 6.2.3.3c), the discussions on lesson planning at the workshop (Chapter 7:7.2.4.2) and the teachers' lesson plans in the journals (this chapter). The results from this triangulation confirm that teachers have a serious problem with lesson planning and it has a negative impact on how they facilitate the development of reading skills.

b) *Linking lesson planning to the Report of the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement*

The above discussion supports the findings of the task team for the review of the implementation that teachers struggle with lesson planning (DoE, 2009:25). The *Report of the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement* (DoE, 2009:25) attests to the fact that the three levels of planning which was expected from the teachers, namely, a learning programme, a work schedule and a lesson plan, was very confusing and demanding. The panel (DoE, 2009:26) made a recommendation to support and guide teachers by rationalising the three levels of planning and minimising duplication. One of the suggestions was to provide national work schedules so that teachers could focus on the preparation of lesson plans, complemented by using good quality textbooks and teacher's guide. In keeping to its promise, the DoE (2008) released four policy documents namely, Foundations for Learning. Foundation Phase Literacy Lesson plans Grade 1, each one per term. They contained exemplars of the lesson plans to assist the teachers to make their own lesson plans. Regardless of having those documents in their classrooms, the selected Grade 1 teachers still experienced problems in lesson planning due to their inability to interpret those lesson plans or make use of them in facilitating the development of their learners' reading skills (Chapter 6:6.3.1.1). The teachers seemed content with using the weekly lesson planning template. When the teachers and I were discussing the lesson plan template form they used for lesson planning in the intervention, they showed me the one they used in schools for weekly lesson planning. As I compared the two templates I realised there were many similarities, in particular the one emphasised at their workshops relating to reflection. Nonetheless, some of the teachers failed to

reflect on how they presented their lessons. One of the limitations of the weekly lesson planning template was that it encouraged teachers to use a restricted language code, predominantly single words and phrases.

Evidently there is uncertainty around the significance of lesson planning and inconsistency in writing out a lesson plan as highlighted in Chapter 6 (6.2.3.3b). The perception amongst the selected Grade 1 teachers was that they believed they were experienced and did not necessarily have to write a complete lesson plan. The issue of lesson planning is critical, considering that teachers have to acquaint themselves with the latest curricular developments when planning and preparing their lessons (Killen, 2010:106; Nieuwoudt & Nieuwoudt, 2011:323-324)

It is thus evident that teachers need further support and guidance with regard to lesson planning if they are to sustain the improvement achieved in their facilitative role in the development of reading skills.

9.3.2 Reflections on the learners' activities

Although the teachers were expected to submit only the learners' written activities, they also engaged them in aural and oral activities which were critical to facilitating the development of reading skills. Unfortunately, some of these activities were not captured in the lesson plans.

9.3.2.1 *Listening and speaking*

At the beginning of each lesson, most teachers set some ground rules, instructing learners to keep quiet, listen to the question, raise their arms if they knew the answer and wait for the teacher to give each an opportunity to answer the question. Learners were also discouraged from answering in chorus. They had to listen attentively when one of them was answering the question. Those ground rules reduced, to a minimum, the learners' tendency to raise their arms long before the teacher finished asking the question and their spontaneity in blurting out the answers. The ground rules, to some extent, helped to maintain discipline in class (GL 9). This activity helped to hone the learners' listening skills and to prepare for co-operative learning.

The lesson introduction often started a dialogue which inspired learners to listen actively and to share their own experiences. Some of the strategies, such as *picture walk*, *question generating*, *retelling* and *predicting* encouraged learner-talk. Through *picture walk* learners took part in the discussions, answered the teachers' questions, asked questions and made comments. The teachers applied the *question generating* strategy effectively by tapping into the learners' prior knowledge and lived experiences in order to make connections with the new content. The more the teachers applied the *question generating* strategy, the better the learners' listening and speaking skills became (GL 4). Some teachers, like T2B, consistently asked *why* and *how* questions to challenge the learners' thinking skills. The strategy *predicting* helped learners to think creatively, make intelligent guesses and to visualise by creating their own mind pictures of what was happening in the text.

9.3.2.2 Reading and phonics

The listening and speaking activities were usually followed by reading activities (GL 4). The teacher would read aloud from the Big Book with learners reading after her. Invariably the teacher would stop reading to draw the learners' attention to the use of punctuation, or to develop vocabulary, do letter and word recognition activities and/or introduce singular and plural form of nouns, depending on the focus of her lesson plan (GL 5). The learners enjoyed reading in chorus, however, when not properly monitored most tended to bark at print and relied on memorisation of words and sentences. This behaviour surfaced when they had to read in groups, indicating that pointing with fingers was still a problem (Chapter 8:8.5.1). In observing how the learners read I noticed that they struggled with associating the letters with their corresponding sounds, proving that they needed to do more activities that would help in developing phonemic awareness and word recognition skills (GL 6).

9.3.2.3 Writing

Table 9.2 (above) showed that most teachers submitted their learners' written activities for the three spiral cycles, though T1B, T2B and T3B did not submit them for Spiral Cycle 1. The various writing activities reinforced understanding of the work the learners did in class (GL 4). In Spiral Cycle 1, T1D gave learners differentiated activities according to her learners' capabilities. The other teachers followed suit in

Spirals 2 and 3. The following are some of the written activities submitted in the journals:

- copying words from the flashcards pasted on the chalkboard;
- matching the animal picture on the left hand side with the correct name on the right hand side; and
- inserting the missing morphemes in the spaces provided within the sentences.

Although the above activities tested the learners' understanding, they were done at a rudimentary level.

At the end of Spiral Cycle 1, the teachers and I reflected on how the guidelines had been implemented. A recommendation was made to improve the implementation of Guideline 4. Instead of giving the same writing and handwriting activity for all the learners in a classroom I encouraged teachers to give differentiated ones. Of utmost importance was for teachers to plan activities that focused on the development of phonemic awareness and word recognition in Spiral Cycles 2 and 3. Those activities should assist learners to demonstrate achievement of the *Assessment Standard*, namely, **to develop phonic awareness** by doing the following:

- *arola mantswe a bonolo ho ya ka dinoko tsa ona, a bontsha paterone ya CVCV le raeme senokong se qetellang jwaloka lo-ma (to bite) and ka-ma (to comb) (segment simple words into syllables showing a CVCV pattern and rhyming syllable at the last part of the syllable).*
- *hlophisa mantswe a tlwaelehleng ho ya ka paterone e tshwanang ya medumo jwaloka hama (to milk) and hata (to step on one's toe) (to group common words into word families).*
- *Lemoha ditumammoho tse bopilweng ka ditlhaku tse pedi qalong ya mantswe jwaloka tsamaya (to go) and thapelo (a prayer) (to recognise two letter blends at the beginning of words).*
- *ho hlokomela mantswe a sebediswang kgafetsa a jwaloka; wena (you), nna (me), rona (us), a kenyeletsa le lebitso la moithuti, le seo a se boneng se ngotswe tikolohong eo a phelang ho yona (to recognise some high frequency sight words including the learner's name and print from the environment) (DoE, 2002:40; DoE, 2002:36).*

The highlight of Spiral Cycles 2 and 3 was the learner activities planned for *Guided Group Reading*. The teacher started with *Shared Reading* then moved to *Guided Group Reading*, in which the teachers often repeated some of the activities they had done during *Shared Reading*, but then focusing on fewer learners. In *Guided Group Reading*, the teachers guided learners to gradually develop the skills to hold the book and point at words correctly, read from left to right, observe punctuation marks and read with the proper intonation. Some teachers, such as T3B, used the Big Book and the Small Books together during *Guided Group Reading* (GL 1 & 3). The learners who were not busy with *Guided Group Reading* were given differentiated tasks.

In Spiral Cycles 2 and 3, the learners were engaged in differentiated writing activities according to each group's capabilities. Some of the activities were creative and tested higher-order skills and comprehension. Learners were encouraged to read for meaning and enhance their semantic, syntactic and graphophonic knowledge. Most teachers included word building exercises. The learners were guided to select the letters written on the cards and construct their own words which they glued onto a poster. This activity gave learners a sense of achievement. Some of the activities were the following:

- writing the names of the seasons of the year indicated by means of pictures in the Learner's book (Chapter 8:8.6.1);
- rearranging the sentences logically in accordance with how Tselane exchanged the chicken until she bought paraffin (Chapter 8:8.7.2); and
- completing a crossword puzzle to help learners to recognise and name letters (Chapter 8:8.6.4).

The writing activities done by the learners provided evidence that teachers use the Big Books not merely for reading, but also for developing learners' writing skills. Although the Big Books contain exercises, some teachers designed their own exercises, as did T1B, who gave a group of learners an exercise in which they had to write out the names of the family members on a diagram depicting a tree, having been instructed to place masculine gender nouns on the left hand-side and the feminine gender nouns on the right hand side (Chapter 8:8.7.4). Of utmost

importance was that the exercises helped to develop learners' thinking skills and consequently to understand the content better.

The teachers showed improvement in the way they facilitated the development of reading skills in Spiral Cycle 3. It was an achievement for both the teachers and their learners to see the learners completing the tasks allocated in class. Another achievement was that teachers had time to assess the learners' work and give them feedback. The highlight was when the learners gave feedback on the tasks.

9.3.3 Reflections on the assessment forms

Table 9.2 (above) revealed that most teachers submitted their assessment forms. T3D still lagged behind and submitted only two assessment forms while T4B submitted only three. The problems I identified with the lesson plans surfaced once more with the teachers' assessment forms (Chapter 9:9.2.1.1a). Most teachers, except for T1D, T1B and T2B did not give any critical feedback on how their colleagues performed in Spiral Cycle 3, but only commented on how the lesson had progressed. T2D wrote the same comments for all the teachers she had assessed at School B. The insights emerging from these reflections point to poor understanding of peer assessment practices by the teachers.

That teachers had problems in assessing one another might have been caused by several reasons. Firstly, it could be that they did not understand how they should assess one another. Secondly, the assessment form might have been too complicated and was too long to complete at one sitting. Thirdly, it seemed as if the teachers were uncomfortable in assessing their colleagues by critiquing their lesson presentations. Most commented on the positive aspects and ignored the negative ones. For instance, none commented on how T3D was using her stick to point when she was reading with the learners, and none mentioned the poor quality of her flashcards. While all the other teachers gave their learners differentiated activities she gave only one activity to all the groups while she was busy with *Guided Group Reading*. Fourthly, it could be that the teachers wanted to do well in the intervention that they ignored the negative aspects of the presentations.

9.3.4 Reflections on the teachers' professional developmental growth reports

Each teacher gave a report of how she perceived her professional developmental growth (PDG) to have occurred. The teachers had to structure their response based on the following questions:

- How did your role, as a teacher, *improve* and/or *change* as a result of your participation in the study?
- How did you *feel* about your participation in the study?
- What do you think were the *highlights/significant* moments to you?

9.3.4.1 T1D's report

T1D believed that she had improved in assigning differentiated activities according to her learners' capabilities and diverse needs and in how to assess them. She now gave her learners time to give feedback on completion of their group activities, with praise when they deserved it and positive comments where relevant. She was thankful for the guidance and support she enjoyed in the study and could therefore proudly testify that her learners, now in Grade 2, could read with confidence. T1D's report shows her assertiveness in how she had developed herself professionally in terms of her relationships with her colleagues at her school and with those at School B. She declared that her participation in the study has helped her to establish healthy relationships with her colleagues. Her enhanced knowledge about the concepts *reading* and *reading processes* has boosted her confidence and dedication to develop her learners' reading skills.

She asserted that Spiral Cycle 3 of the intervention was the highlight of the study. For her, it was an honour to be assessed by the professor and lecturer from the University of the Free State, including her school principal and colleagues from School D and B. The notion of having received such positive feedback on her lesson presentation reassured her that she was well on her way to improving her facilitative role in the development of reading skills. She believed that with more practice she could further improve on how she facilitated the development of readings skills. Positive about her report is that she was looking into the future with hope and determination that she could do even better than demonstrated in the study.

9.3.4.2 T2D's report

In her report, T2D declared that she had acquired knowledge, skills, values and attitudes pertinent to facilitating the development of reading skills. She asserted that she could now effectively apply reading methodologies such as *Shared Reading* and *Guided Reading* as well as such strategies as *picture walk*, *predicting* and *questioning technique* to introduce her learners to the five components of facilitating the development of reading. She could achieve this by focusing on the themes from the Big Books, to which she ascribed her ability to encourage and motivate the learners to participate meaningfully in reading activities. She maintained that she could now effectively engage her learners in various activities through which they could demonstrate the achievement of *Assessment Standards*. Although she did not plan role-play or dramatisation during the intervention she affirmed that she could now use them to inspire her learners to respond to the story. This information revealed her eagerness to acquire knowledge and skills pertinent to her practice in order to improve her knowledge base. There was also an indication, to some extent, that she was now more eager and willing to read the policy documents and other sources.

Her gratefulness in having participated in the study revolved primarily around her learners, not her own personal gain. She was happy about the opportunities she provided for her learners to engage in enjoyable yet challenging activities. Emerging from her report was that she used the Big Books to motivate and invite her learners to develop a love for reading and to have a passion towards learning how to read. She mentioned that she left the Big Book on the stand so that learners could page through it at a later stage to reinforce understanding.

T2D considered her lesson presentation in Spiral Cycle 3 to be the highlight of the study. The constructive feedback from the professor, her mentor, colleagues and school principal enhanced her confidence, an affirmation of her dedication and commitment to her learners and improving her practice. T2D's report is evidence that she had improved her facilitative role in the development of her learners' reading skills with the promise of continuing with the good lessons in the future, making the study worthwhile.

9.3.4.3 T3D's report

In her professional developmental growth report, T3D acknowledged a degree of improvement as a result of her participation in the study. She identified the use of the Big Books and the application of *Shared Reading* as the areas in which she had shown some improvement, and maintained that she could now guide her learners to interpret and analyse the stories in the Big Books. She also insists that in using them she stimulated learner talk and active participation in the lesson. In her report, T3D appreciated collaboration between the teachers from the two schools, B and D, as through this partnership they were able to learn from one another.

T3D stated that she was excited about her participation in the study since she now understood her facilitative role in the development of reading skills. However, she felt very strongly that she did not have sufficient time to do her last presentation. While I acknowledged some degree of improvement in her performance I also state that her lesson in Spiral 3 was not up to standard (Chapter 8:8.7.3).

9.3.4.4 T1B's report

T1B's report confirmed how her participation in the study facilitated her improvement as a teacher, regardless of her initial feelings of frustration and discouragement at its commencement. For her, the workshop in Cycle 1 of my intervention was a turning point in understanding the phases of curriculum improvements and refinements which the participants had perceived as curriculum change. She also gained insights into how to develop reading skills and what the concepts *reading* and *reading process* encompassed. Her new understanding motivated her to improve her facilitative role in the development of her learners' reading skills and strengthened her tenacious resolve not to give up.

T1B professed her gratitude for the assistance and guidance she enjoyed in the study. She was not happy with her lesson presentation during Spiral Cycle 2 of the intervention. Nonetheless, the positive and constructive feedback motivated her to continue even when she was on the verge of quitting. For her, the highlights included the following:

- attending the research day of the Faculty of Education held on the 21st August 2010 at a private conference venue in which where I presented my study
- participating in the empowerment workshop on the 27th - 28th May 2011, held at the University
- participating in the assessment workshop held on the 18th -19th October 2011, at Schools B and D, where she presented her best lesson.

T1B showed a remarkable improvement during the duration of the study, making her one of the best teachers. In addition, she was my link with the other teachers at School B and I relied on her willingness to provide information that I needed telephonically.

9.3.4.5 T2B's report

In her report, T2B maintained that her understanding of the curriculum improvements since C2005 until the recent launch of CAPS in 2011 had contributed to her professional developmental growth as a teacher. She expressed her gratitude for participating in the study, and for gaining much knowledge, many skills and an attitude that made her a better teacher. She also appreciated the collaboration between the teachers at Schools B and D and some lecturers from the University, as well as the valuable lessons learnt from those partnerships. T2B had a conviction that her professional developmental growth was not only confined to classroom practice but extended beyond the classroom to other schools and the University.

She was thankful for the motivation, guidance, support and advice she received as a participant, regarding them as useful in improving her facilitative role in the development of reading skills. She claims to be competent in using the Big Books, in applying the questioning technique, in emphasising the use of Sesotho words in class and in understanding the Sesotho syllable structure. Her report was indicative of the teachers' willingness to empower themselves and to be in control in their practice.

T2B regarded the empowerment workshop in Cycle 1 of the intervention as one of the highlights of the study, as she felt it made her and her fellow participants aware

of curriculum improvements and how they influenced their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. Another highlight of the study was the donation of the Big Books and the Small Books, which helped them to become more effective in their facilitative role in the development of their learners' reading skills.

9.3.4.6 T3B's report

T3B stated in her professional developmental growth report that she had become more reflective in her approach. As part of her improvement, she affirmed that she had learnt how to deal with her strengths and weaknesses in relation to how she facilitated the development of her learners' reading skills. She now informed her learners how valuable they were, probably as a motivation for them to learn better. She was also aware that her Setswana mother tongue had a negative influence on how her Grade 1 learners acquired and learnt Sesotho.

T3B did not really address how she felt about her participation in the study. However, what emerged from the report was her keenness to discipline her learners and to focus on what they must do in class. She believed that giving clear instructions (in Sesotho) was central to being effective in class and hoped that it would increase learner participation.

As with T1D and T2D, she considered the assessment workshop in Spiral Cycle 3 of the intervention to be the highlight of the study, as it brought the teachers from Schools B and D together to assess one another's progress, by demonstrating knowledge, skills and values they acquired in the study and to determine what further assistance and guidance could still be provided for the teachers. T3B also appreciated the kind gesture from the University in providing learners with the Big Books and the Small Books. This was a great motivation for the learners to develop a love for reading and to enjoy reading from them. The teachers also learnt to use the strategies and skills of facilitating the development of reading skills when using these books.

9.3.4.7 T4B's report

T4B attested that her role as a teacher had improved. She had learnt the strategies to accommodate all the learners during her lesson presentations. In collaborating with colleagues from School D she had acquired some skills which equipped her to deal with learners with learning problems.

She acknowledged that her participation in the study was a rewarding experience and the positive and constructive feedback she received after her lesson presentations boosted her confidence. She was full of pride that she had successfully manoeuvred her way between her private studies, her work and my study, the highlight of which was building teamwork amongst themselves and between colleagues at School D.

9.3.4.8 Insights emerging from reflections on the reports

Although each teacher's developmental growth was unique there were some commonalities. They all appreciated the support and guidance they received in participating in the study and felt more motivated and better equipped with the knowledge, skills and values needed to facilitate the development of reading skills. This had boosted their confidence and enhanced their understanding of their practice. They were also thankful for the Big Books and Small Books, pencils, erasers and sharpeners that were sponsored by the University. The Big Books help the teachers to motivate learners to develop a love for reading, attracted by the large print, the many and colourful pictures. The teachers value the partnership and collaboration established between themselves and the teachers from the other school and with the University.

The teachers' professional developmental growth reports revealed that teachers need continued guidance and support in order to improve their facilitative role in the development of their learners' reading skills. One of the fundamental issues that will contribute towards improving their practice is the availability of reading books.

9.3.5 Reflections on the Epiphanic Moments

The implementation of the guidelines was intended to produce evidence of how teachers could be assisted to improve their facilitative role in the development of their learners' reading skills. However, as the process unfolded, I also observed the manifestation of some epiphanic moments, which provided more evidence of how the teachers improved on their facilitative role in developing the learners' reading skills. The following is a description of the epiphanic moments.

9.3.5.1 Presenting well-structured lessons

Presenting a well-structured lesson was an epiphanic moment for T1D and T2D, which highlights the significance of GL 5 in the study. In spite of lesson planning remaining problematic for most teachers, T1D and T2D managed to present well-structured lessons in Spiral Cycle 1. As I observed their lessons I noticed a smooth transition between the different developmental phases of the lesson, and good integration of the different skills, including writing and handwriting. They also applied the different reading methodologies, strategies and media, and that they spent hours planning and preparing for their lessons surfaced as I observed how they engaged their learners in differentiated group activities according to their capabilities. In their first lesson presentations they already made attempts to develop their learners' phonemic awareness. T1D showed assertiveness in affirming herself as a professional and as a role model for the other Grade 1 teachers at her school, whilst T2D demonstrated her commitment and dedication to empower herself as a facilitator by keeping the learners captivated, inspired and curious throughout the lesson.

T1B's epiphanic moment of presenting well-structured lessons occurred in Spiral Cycle 3, when she made an impressive turnaround exemplified by her thoroughness, eloquence and patience as she explained concepts, modelled reading with the appropriate intonation, and emphasized punctuation marks. In her lesson she focused on developing the learners' vocabulary pertinent to the names of family members by using very rich Sesotho words such as *moena* (younger brother), *moholwane* (elder brother) and *kgaitsemi* (sister). I was impressed with the way she also introduced linguistic concepts such as *botona le botshehadi* (feminine and masculine gender) and how well she utilised her group leaders to maintain discipline

during group activities. T1B gave learners differentiated tasks to do in class, on completion of which they provided feedback, which gave them a rare feeling of accomplishment in their learning (Chapter 8:8.6.4).

9.3.5.2 *Developing as a motivator*

I was impressed by the way T2D inspired her learners to enjoy the reading lessons she presented. Immediately after her introduction she would give learners information about books, saying they had similar characteristics to those of a person. During the lesson presentations she stated that a book, like a person, has a name, which is the title of the book and that, as with giving birth, a book is written by someone called an author. She explained that each person has a biography and that similarly a book tells a story about its characters and events, within a setting and plot structure. She also stated that as with people a book has a birth date, which is its publication date. When she started reading aloud to the learners she did so with passion, capturing the tone and mood of the story.

T2D used metaphors to motivate her learners about reading. She personified the seasons by explaining that as each person celebrates his/her birthday during a specific month so does each season. The seasons, like people, have birth months, though unlike people, who celebrate their birthdays in only one month of the year the seasons celebrate every three months. She demonstrated this idea using the summer season, *Hlabula* (summer), which lasts for three months, namely, *Tshitwe* (December), *Pherekong* (January) and *Hlakola* (February). This was a unique way of providing scaffolding for learners to acquire new knowledge about the seasons and the months of each. In motivating her learners to read with meaning she asked them to retell the story (Chapter 8:8.7.2).

9.3.5.3 *Integrating thinking and reasoning with the other skills*

T2B's epiphanic moment manifested itself in the way she integrated thinking and reasoning with the other skills. It was inspirational to observe how T2B integrated listening, speaking, reading with thinking and reasoning skills into her lesson. This was perceptible in the way she applied the *questioning technique*, by continuously asking higher-order questions such as the *why* and *how* questions. As she was

asking these types of questions she challenged the learners' thinking and helped them to construct new meanings from the text. In the Big Book, *Moo re dulang teng* (Our neighbourhood) is a diagram (on pages 14 and 15), illustrating the neighbourhood in which Karabo resides. The teacher skilfully guided the learners to do an activity in which they had to explain the route Karabo took to arrive at her school. The activity helped learners to think, using the picture clues such as the traffic light, the park and the hospital to understand how to give and follow directions (Chapter 8:8.5.6).

9.3.5.4 Emerging as a lifelong learner

During Spiral Cycle 1, T3B struggled with the implementation of some of the guidelines, however, she listened attentively to the positive comments about her lesson and the suggestions on how she could improve. In Spiral Cycle 2, I was struck by her willingness and determination to learn and to improve on her facilitative role in the development of the learners' reading skills. In Spiral Cycle 2, there were some signs of improvement. Her lesson was much better planned and prepared, she had an introduction, shortened her *picture walk* and began to be conscious about the selection of Sesotho words when presenting the lesson. She also integrated the different skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing.

It was in Spiral Cycle 3 that I observed a particularly significant moment as T3B emerged as a lifelong learner. Spiral Cycle 3 was the highlight of her participation in the study and I observed as most of the guidelines came together. She took the initiative to arrange a carpet for her learners to sit on and mounted the Big Book on a wooden stand to allow each learner to have a view of it. She had prepared flashcards, which indicated the vocabulary that she wanted to use, such as *nngwe* (one), *pedi* (two), *tharo* (three) up to *leshome* (ten). She also had flashcards of the names of the different fruits, such as *peneapole* (a pineapple), *pere* (a pear) and *apole* (an apple). The flashcards minimised Setswana interference. During *Guided Group Reading* she also demonstrated how to hold a book correctly and point correctly at the syllables and words. She also did word-building activities with the learners to develop phonemic awareness (Chapter 8:8.7.6).

9.3.5.5 *Building confidence as a facilitator*

An illuminating experience for T4B crystallised as I observed her confidence blossom. She presented her lesson, showing the developmental phases of the lesson and integrating the different skills. She also focused on the development of phonemic awareness and vocabulary development. Because T4B was the youngest of the teachers she was very apprehensive at the beginning of the study. The first reading lesson that she presented, during the in-depth situation analysis, was very teacher-centred, using a deductive approach. She did not plan or prepare the reading methodologies, strategies, learner activities or media and there was very little learner participation. The only activity carried out by learners was transcribing a long list of words into their dictionary books. She seemed uncertain about her ability to present a reading lesson.

Since most teachers felt the same way as T4B, I had to address the issue of enhancing their motivation at the workshop, one of objectives of which was to build their morale. This seemed to have made a huge difference in how T4B facilitated the development of reading skills when the teachers started with the intervention. She showed improvement from Spiral Cycle 1. In triangulating between her lesson presentation during the in-depth situation analysis, the motivational speech at the workshop and her lesson presentations in Spiral Cycles 1 and 3, I realised that T4B only needed guidance and motivation to overcome her apprehensiveness. It seemed as if this study provided a framework from which she could make meaning of her role as a facilitator in the development of reading skills, thus complementing her knowledge, skills and attitudes she had acquired through her professional qualification, a University Diploma in Education (UDE). In reflecting on her improvement, I attribute it to her having attended the workshop and adopted the guidelines which provided better scaffolding for her to understand her role as a facilitator in the development of reading skills. Showing confidence in presenting her lesson in Spiral Cycle 1 was an epiphanic moment.

9.3.5.6 *Posing a new challenge*

T3D's participation in the intervention showed some improvement in the way she implemented some of the guidelines. Her lessons showed progression between the

developmental phases of the lessons, as she became confident in using the Big Books and the Small Books and in applying some of the reading methodologies and strategies to facilitate the development of reading skills. However, T3D's improvement was not as remarkable as with other teachers and I did not experience any epiphanic moment during her lesson presentations. In reflecting on her performance in the intervention I saw she posed a challenge for me to make a follow-up to determine what further assistance she needed in improving her facilitative role in the development of reading skills so that she can be on par with the other teachers who participated in the study.

The epiphanic moments discussed above were experienced by the teachers during my interactions with them as practitioners and co-researchers. I observed how the manifestation of the epiphanic moments provided more evidence of how the selected Grade 1 teachers improved their facilitative role in developing their learners' reading skills.

9.4 CONCLUSION

Chapter 9 is a reflection of how the intervention unfolded from my point of view as a researcher. In this chapter, my reflections regarding the teachers' performance in the *post-intervention test*, revealed some improvements in their understanding of the concepts 'reading' and 'reading process' as explained in Chapter 2 (2.2). They also improved on the use of Sesotho words and terms when facilitating the development of reading skills, indicating a strong possibility to break the monopoly of using English terminology in facilitating the development of reading skills in Sesotho. However, evidence points to the fact that teachers are still not well grounded in their understanding and application of the Schemata theory, as another key concept, in facilitating the development of the learners' reading skills (Chapter 2:2.2.7). The teachers' poor performance in answering Question 3 of the *post-intervention test*, indicate a serious need for them to develop their linguistic competence with special reference to acquiring a sound theoretical knowledge of the Sesotho syllable structure and how to apply that knowledge in facilitating the development of reading skills.

The insights emerging from the teachers' journals indicate that teachers need consistency in writing full lesson plans to minimise some of the problems they experience in this regard (Chapter 4:4.7). In reflecting on the learners' activities, there were many positive initiatives to integrate listening, speaking, reading and writing skills coupled with thinking skills and language usage and use. Nonetheless, some of the teachers showed lack of confidence in planning learners' activities which integrate the components of developing reading skills as expounded in Chapter 2 (2.2.3). Reflections on the learners' activities (9.2.3.2) also revealed that the teachers were not yet ready to plan activities based on *Group Reading* and *Independent Reading* (Chapter 4:4.5.3; 4.5.5). The implication is that reading for pleasure does not receive attention in Grade 1 classes, given the background of the challenges teachers experience in facilitating the development of reading skills in Sesotho (Chapter 6). Although this study did not focus on assessment practices, the insights flowing from the teachers' assessment forms highlight some of the dilemmas in applying assessment practices, especially with peer assessment. A more holistic intervention is required in this aspect.

The reflections on the teachers' reports indicate that with more support and encouragement, it is possible for teachers to improve their facilitative role in developing learners' reading skills. The same thoughts permeate the reflections made on the teachers' epiphanic moments.

In the next and final chapter I focus on answering the research question, making recommendations and outlining my concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER 10

OVERVIEW, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

10.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes an overview of the research with an explanation of how the research questions were answered. I also demonstrate how the reflections on the implementation of the guidelines led to recommendations in order to sustain and strengthen the improvements made. Problems for further research are indicated and the limitations of the study are discussed, before I arrive at my conclusion.

10.2 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

The orientation to this research is explained in Chapter 1. Against the background of the poor performance of South African learners in reading and the difficulties Sesotho teachers are experiencing in facilitating the development of reading skills in Sesotho within the context of OBE, the following research questions were formulated:

- How do Grade 1 teachers in some Mangaung schools facilitate the development of reading skills under their prevailing circumstances?
- What can the Grade 1 teachers and I do to improve their facilitative role in the development of reading skills?
- How can the Grade 1 teachers and I assess the teachers' progress as they improve their facilitative role in the development of reading skills?

A literature review with the focus on the concept 'reading' (Chapter 2), reading approaches based on linguistic and learning theories (Chapter 3), and reading programmes within the context of OBE (Chapter 4), was undertaken to establish a theoretical base for the empirical research. I chose a qualitative design, with

components of collaborative and participatory action research. The design and methodology, as well as the relevance of concepts such as 'validity', 'reliability' and 'trustworthiness' for my study, are explained in Chapter 5. That chapter also paints a picture of how data was collected and analysed, which instruments were used, how ethical considerations were observed and the limitation of the study.

In order to answer the first research question, I undertook an in-depth situation analysis in four schools in Manguang, using interviews and observations as research instruments. The results of this part of the empirical research are presented in Chapter 6. The insights emerging from the in-depth situation analysis guided the intervention that followed.

To answer the second research question an intervention in the form of action research was carried out. During Cycle 1 of the action research I conducted a workshop. The literature review (Chapters 2; 3; 4) and the results from the in-depth situation analysis led to the content of the workshop.

Chapter 7 gives an exposé of the proceedings of the workshop and the findings I arrived at as possible solutions to the problem of how to assist Grade 1 teachers to improve their facilitative role in the development of their learners' reading skills. At the workshop the teachers wrote the *pre-intervention test*, which revealed prevalent misconceptions (Chapter 8:8.2). The knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired from literature review, findings from the in-depth situation analysis (Chapter 6), the insights emerging from the workshop (Chapter 7) and the findings from the *pre-intervention test* (Chapter 8:8.2.2) provided the basis for formulation of the guidelines (Chapter 8:8.3), which were used as an instrument to benchmark the teachers' performance and track their improvement. The teachers collaborated in the formulation of the guidelines.

Cycle 2 of the intervention, developed into three spiral cycles, two of which, Spiral Cycles 1 and 2, were addressing the second question. The details are captured in Chapter 8 (8.5; 8.6). However, the answer to the third question, "How can the teachers and I assess their progress as they improve their facilitation of the development of reading skills?" came through in Spiral Cycle 3 (Chapter 8:8.7), at the end of which the teachers wrote the *post-intervention test*.

During the intervention, it was evident that the teachers were beginning to understand the concept 'reading' and 'reading process', how the two concepts are operationalised in the policy documents such as the NCS, FfLC and CAPS and how they are eventually actualised in facilitating the development of reading skills in Sesotho. There were also traces of understanding of the different reading approaches. Although the approaches did not form part of the guidelines, they are an integral part of the facilitation of developing learners' reading skills. In reflecting on the intervention, it surfaced that, to some extent, the teachers still employed the *look-and say*, *language-experience*, *text-based* approaches as well as the top down, bottom up and the interactive reading approaches in their lesson presentations, even though it was not done coherently (Chapter 3:3.2.3; 3.2.4; 3.2.5;3.3). In spite of the fact that the teachers never acknowledged the influence of the *BTL* and *READ* programmes (Chapter 4:4.3; 4.4) in facilitating of the development of reading skills, there was evidence of traces of this influence.

Chapter 9 strengthens and validates the findings in Cycle 1 and 2 and provides more evidence of how the selected Grade 1 teachers improved their facilitative role (theory and practice) in the development of reading skills based on the reflections from the *post-intervention test*, the teachers' journals and the epiphanic moments. From the insights emanating from the reflections I conclude that with guidance and support the teachers can improve their facilitative role and change their situation. Although the participating teachers demonstrated a remarkable improvement on the practical component, the theoretical component still needs further attention, a fact which still attests to the existence of the gap between theory and practice. The following recommendations indicate possibilities of how to sustain the improvements made so far.

10.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FLOWING FROM THE GUIDELINES

The two cycles and each spiral cycle of action research in this study ended with a reflection, as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. The reflections on the situation analysis, how the intervention was executed and what was achieved from the intervention as means to improving the teachers' facilitative role in the development of their learners' reading skills, what challenges the teachers experienced, and how

to chart the way forward, provided a framework against which I could draw the recommendations I now present in this chapter.

10.3.1 Guideline 1: Teachers must facilitate the development of reading skills by using real books, the Big Books and the Small Books

All seven teachers used the Big Books and the Small Books in facilitating the development of reading skills. Evidently, GL 1 was necessary in helping the teachers to improve their facilitative role in developing their learners' reading skills. The availability of the Big Books and the Small Books provided opportunities in which I monitored how each improved her facilitative role. They assisted the teachers to expose learners to different themes treated in them, thereby enhancing, to some extent, the learners' semantic, syntactic, graphophonic and world knowledge. The books created opportunities in which I observed how learners demonstrated the achievement of some of the ASs in developing their reading skills (Chapter 8:8.5.7). Due to the learners not yet being familiar with handling real books, which might have resulted in damaging them, the teachers laminated them for durability.

The challenge that still lies ahead is for each Grade 1 class to have a sufficient number of Small Books to cover most of the learners. The shortage of Small Books makes it difficult for teachers to apply other methodologies, such as *Group Reading* and *Independent Reading*. Another challenge, related to the one above, is that Grade 1 learners of 2011 had already been exposed to a variety of stories written in the Big Books, consequently a gap would exist when they proceed to Grade 2 in 2012. Since they had already mastered the themes in those stories they definitely needed more Big Books and Small Books, with new stories that would help teachers to deal with new themes or delve deeper into those only handled in 2011. What will the situation at the two schools be? Will the teachers be creative with the few books at their disposal, or will the schools buy books for the learners?

RECOMMENDATION 1

The availability and accessibility of real books in a classroom is a cornerstone of literacy development (Chapter 4:4.4.2). This study has provided evidence of benefits associated with using real books to enhance the development of reading skills, for

both the teachers and the learners. Teachers do not have to lend one another reading books before they can start with reading lessons. They do not have to make copies of the few books that circulate amongst all the FP classes and violate the copyrights of authors in order to facilitate the development of reading skills. Teachers do not have to transcribe the reading books onto pages so that learners can take home those pages instead of books to practice reading at home. Learners do not have to wait until the third term before they can be trusted to hold a book in their hands for fear that if they are introduced to real books early in the year they will damage or tear them apart.

The school principals, as heads of schools and of the SMTs, must be made aware that it is extremely difficult for the teachers, not only the selected Grade 1 teachers in the study but all the FP teachers, to facilitate the development of reading skills without books. The school principals and their SMTs are certainly aware of the crisis facing the FP learners' inability to read at appropriate age levels. Surely they are aware of the intervention mechanisms that the national Department of Education (DoE) implemented, since the release of the PIRLS Report of 2006 and the *Systemic Evaluations Reports* of 2001 and 2007 to ameliorate the situation. The implementation of the *Foundations for Learning Campaign* was an initiative to give direction into facilitating the development of reading skills and to revitalise the process. The teachers were expected to implement a new reading programme and to apply reading methodologies and strategies to increase the levels of reading at the FP. These initiatives could have been successful if both the teachers and the learners had possessed reading books and been motivated and eager to read them. Flowing from the argument above, I recommend that the DoE produce a detailed report of how it intended to ensure that the reading books are available at the schools to ensure the successful implementation of these initiatives.

According to the *Report of the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement* (DoE, 2009:53), Section 21 schools are allocated funds that can also be utilised for procuring LTSM, including reading books. In spite of availability of funds, some schools in both Section 20 and 21 are still characterized by abject programme settings, and lack of educational resources such as reading books, textbooks and writing materials. In cases where the school principals have

failed to buy reading books, I recommend that the DoE conduct a full-scale investigation into the issue. The school principals and their SMTs must account for the absence or shortages of reading books at their schools. They must provide sufficient evidence of how the funds for the procurement of LTSM, specifically of reading books, was utilised. The full-scale investigation must be followed by a reversal strategy which should fast-track the purchasing of the reading books as top priority. Following that, each school must draw up plans of how they will progressively ensure that reading books are available at the schools and ensure that each classroom has its own library. The quality of the reading books available in the school library must also be assessed to determine if they promote the development of reading. The role of the school librarian must be reviewed and suggestions be made as to how her/his role can be improved to incorporate the development of reading skills at the FP.

10.3.2 Guideline 2: Teachers must read the policy documents and familiarise themselves with the necessary knowledge, concepts and skills contained in those documents

The teachers are the implementers of the curriculum and as such are required to read the policy documents to make it easy for them to apply the knowledge and skills contained in the policy documents (Chapter 6:6.2.1.2). The empowerment workshop presented for the teachers was a good beginning for teachers to understand the significance of reading the policy documents (Chapter 7:7.4.2), and boosted their motivation and willingness to read them (Chapter 7:7.2.4.1; 7.4.2). Consequently, the implementation of CAPS was not met with negativity and hostility from the selected Grade 1 teachers.

Since the DoE ensured that teachers had access to the policy documents a year prior to the implementation of CAPS in 2011, it was easy for them to acquaint themselves with the basic knowledge, skills and values contained in the CAPS Home Language for FP policy documents. The teachers in the study were excited to have the Sesotho policy document *Setatementsa sa Leano la Kharikhulamo le Tekanyetso sa Naha Dikereiting tsa R – 3 Sesotho Puo ya Lapeng: Moralo wa ho qetela* (Chapter

8:8.2.4). In implementing guideline 2, teachers had to read the English and Sesotho policy documents to familiarise themselves with such aspects as:

- the *skills* to be taught in the Home Language curriculum
- *an integrated approach, time allocation, assessment*
- the *requirements* for reading, *listening and speaking, reading and writing* focus time
- the *five components* for teaching reading
- the *overview of skills* to be taught in the Home Language Grade 1.

These policy documents emphasise the need for FP teachers to understand and apply *Shared Reading* (including Shared Writing), *Group Guided Reading* and *Paired, Independent Reading* (GL 3). They also guide them on how to integrate the five components of developing reading, namely, *phonemic awareness, word recognition (sight words and phonics), comprehension, vocabulary* and *fluency* in assisting the learners to be effective readers and writers (DoBE, 2011a:10-22; DoBE, 2011b:6-21).

The teachers now look forward to reading the CAPS policy documents in a way that is embracive of those improvements. This is in contrast to the feelings of anxiety and betrayal which they experienced when the NCS and the FfLC were launched, and to the perception that the DoE was frequently changing the curriculum. They are now more confident and enthusiastic about the implementation of CAPS, since they understand better the history of curriculum improvements and are better equipped for their implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Since 1994, curriculum change in South Africa has been inevitable (Bertram, 2008:4; Jansen & Taylor, 2003:1). These changes were then formalised into policies, which were then gazetted and written into policy documents to promulgate those changes. The public would then be invited and encouraged to make inputs by means of discussion documents, and Green Papers or White Papers (Jansen & Taylor, 2003:8). In considering the number of policies promulgated, I doubt if they ever reached the teachers for their inputs and, even if they did, I assume they were met

with apathy. As a result of the implementation of C2005, NCS, the FfLC and CAPS, a huge portion of the education budget is invested in presenting major policy conferences and in writing the policy documents. However, it seems as if the DoE has failed to communicate with the teachers how these policies should be translated into practice by implementing the changes and improvements (Bertram, 2008:3; DoE, 2009:22; Jansen & Taylor, 2003:1). Therefore, the learning facilitators had dutifully held workshops and handed over the policy documents to the teachers, who rarely read them. As a consequence, the implementation of the curriculum improvements was flawed (Jansen & Taylor, 2003:1&40-41).

On the basis that teachers and the principals seldom participate in the policy formulation with regard to curriculum change or improvement, I therefore recommend that the understanding of policy documents receive high priority at school level so that teachers can make meaningful inputs before any policy document can be finalised for implementation. In the same way that the DoE invests money in formulating policies and writing policy documents, the same rigour must be applied in ensuring that the teachers are involved in the process of making policies they are expected to implement. This will encourage teachers to broaden their curriculum knowledge and take ownership of the implementation processes. The policy documents must be sent to all the schools for intensive and thorough interrogation and a stamp of approval. This process must be obligatory, including every staff member, the SGB members and student representatives. It must be accompanied by clear and specific timeframes to interrogate the policy document, prepare feedback and send it to the DoE. In so doing, every teacher, to some extent, will have actively participated in the policymaking process and will be fully aware of the policy and its pending implementation.

10.3.3 Guideline 3: Teachers must apply different reading methodologies and strategies in facilitating the development of reading skills

The teachers already mastered the application of *Shared Reading*, *Reading Aloud*, and to some extent, *Guided Reading*. However, they still have to practise how to apply *Group Reading* and *Independent Reading* in facilitating the development of reading skills. This depends largely on the availability of the Big Books and Small

Books containing a variety of new stories in the classrooms. The effective application of *Group Reading* requires learners to have many Small Books. The availability of other reading books, fiction and non-fiction, would help learners to advance to *Independent Reading*. Even though the teachers applied some strategies to involve learners in the reading lessons and to stimulate their thinking, they still did not apply many other strategies which are discussed in detail in Chapter 4 (4.6). Some of the few strategies that were used, such as *predicting*, need to be applied correctly. The selected Grade 1 teachers who participated in the study applied the strategy *predicting* very superficially. In applying this, the teachers must write down some of the learners' predictions on the chalkboard or chart. As they read the story they must help learners to verify if their predictions were right or wrong by providing supporting evidence when they arrive at the relevant page(s) of the story. In so doing, they will be helping their learners to read with meaning.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The selected Grade 1 teachers, who participated in this study value the collaboration initiated between the Schools B and D (Makoelle, 2012:88). Through this partnership they have become aware that the knowledge and skills possessed by each teacher can be used in a complementary way to strengthen their initiatives to improve their facilitative role in developing their learners' reading skills. This collaboration is a positive start towards what Snow (2011:2) terms "distributed cognition", and which encourages people, in the case of this study the Grade 1 teachers, to invite inputs from each teacher and work collaboratively on those inputs in solving a task.

At the end of the intervention the teachers are aware that they have to use reading methodologies and strategies to improve their facilitative role in the development of reading skills. However, the benefits are great if they do so as a team, and thus practice distributed cognition. Of even more importance is that they cannot confine themselves to the few reading methodologies and strategies that they implemented during lesson presentations to sustain their achievement in the study. There is a variety of reading methodologies and strategies that can be implemented in facilitating the development of reading skills. In this case I strongly recommend that the SMTs buy books which teachers must read in order to enhance their knowledge

base, particularly the following: *Reading and writing in junior classes* (Flanagan, 1997); *Practical guide to facilitating language learning* (Wessels, 2010); *Literacy in the Foundation Phase* (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008); and *Teaching reading in the early grades. A teacher's handbook* (DoE, 2008i). In the meantime, teachers must go to the libraries to access these books. The READ Educational Trust has also published several books on the different reading methodologies and strategies, some of which teachers already have in their possession. They must read and study these books and other relevant sources.

Evidently, teachers still need further guidance and support to apply effectively the reading methodologies and strategies with which they are familiar, and acquire knowledge, skills and values about the ones they have not yet attempted to implement in their classes. I therefore recommend that they broaden their *circle of collaboration* to include other FP teachers in Grade 2 and 3, their HoDs and learning facilitators. The teachers must nominate a steering committee, which will determine how this *circle of collaboration* will operate and with the help of a steering committee plan an intensive workshop to explore other reading methodologies and strategies and how to implement them. The teachers must develop a clear plan of action outlining the purpose of such a workshop, who, when and how it will be presented. The plan must also entail what knowledge, skills and values must be acquired at that workshop and how it will be implemented. The plan must entail which mechanisms will be put in for follow-up sessions, support, motivation and guidance. In so doing, the teachers will be able to share their expertise and learn from one another. A prerequisite for attending a workshop of this nature is that the teachers will have read widely about the reading methodologies and strategies from the recommended books and be highly motivated and willing to participate. The guiding principle must be an assurance that each teacher's inputs will be valued and that her/his experiences provide a platform for advancement and further improvement. This support and guidance can be gradually withdrawn once the teachers can apply the reading methodologies and strategies creatively and independently.

One of the findings to emerge from the in-depth situation analysis was that the workshops presented by the officials of the DoE were ineffective. The teachers complained about the poor quality and short duration for the amount of information

they contained. They doubted the expertise of some of the presenters and were frustrated by the use of English at the workshops. The general feeling was that they did not benefit from them (Chapter 6:6.2.3.3), therefore an additional recommendation is that they be presented by people with excellent credentials and that Sesotho be used as a language of communication. The duration must be realistic in terms of the quality of knowledge, skills and values to be acquired and the quality of participation required from the participants.

10.3.4 Guideline 4: Teachers must integrate different language skills in one lesson unit, including writing and handwriting when facilitating the development of reading skills

The NCS policy documents featured the six learning outcomes which informed language teaching and learning at the FP. The CAPS documents, on the other hand, prescribe a combination of listening and speaking, reading and phonics, writing and handwriting skills as the cornerstone in the FP Home Language curriculum, coupled with thinking and reasoning, language structure and use. These skills must be integrated into the four basic language skills (DoBE, 2011a:10-19; DoBE, 2011b:6-23). Evidently, the facilitation of the development of reading skills extends far beyond reading, and necessitates teachers continuously enriching their knowledge base of concepts such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, handwriting as well as of thinking and reasoning and language structure and use. That they are used in an integrated way in facilitating the development of reading skills implies that the teachers' knowledge about them is extensive. However, the study has proved that on *reading* it is below standard, implying that their understanding of other skills is as poor. The basic requirement is that teachers continuously enhance their content knowledge about these different skills and ways to facilitate their development.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The NCS adopted a balanced language programme (*BLP*) in facilitating the development of reading skills, advocating an integrated approach to developing the four basic language skills. The implication is that teachers must have a balanced understanding, not only of the concept *reading*, but also of *speaking, listening, writing*

and *handwriting*, and how they must be integrated with thinking and reasoning as well as with language structure and use. I therefore recommend that each FP teacher read the books specified in Recommendation 3 and other books on the same topic. Then, in their *circle of collaboration*, the teachers must come together and discuss their understanding of these skills and how they can be applied in an integrated way.

In considering the depth and breadth of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required from a Grade 1 teacher in order to effectively facilitate the development of reading skills, implies some paradigm shift in the way the FP teachers are currently utilised. I recommend that the FP teachers do not teach all the subjects offered at this phase, such as Literacy (Home Language), Numeracy (Mathematics), Life Skills (General Studies) and First Additional Language (FAL). Every FP teacher, given that s/he is suitably qualified to teach all the subjects, must be responsible for only two subjects, one of which must be an HL, in which each FP teacher must specialise. Each teacher can then choose a subject between Numeracy (Mathematics), Life Skills (General Studies) and FAL, which s/he will present then rotate in all the FP grades (1-3). The feasibility of implementing this recommendation has already been validated at School D, where the FP teachers have opportunities to teach from Grades 1 to 3. Although their system still encourages class teaching, following this recommendation will put in place a system in which a teacher will be responsible for his/her two subjects in all the grades. T2D and T3D proved that it is practicable for an FP teacher to be responsible for more than one grade because she facilitated the development of reading skills for both Grade 1 and 2 learners in the study.

The rationale behind this recommendation is that FP teachers will have a reduced workload and less administrative work, and so be able to focus on their facilitative role in developing their learners. This recommendation gives more clarity on how the recommendation proposed in the report of the *Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement* can be implemented at the schools (DoE, 2009:28). The teachers will be responsible for presenting the subjects they like and have a passion for teaching. They will be able to devote time for thorough lesson planning and preparation because their focus will be on only two subjects. They will probably take pride in being recognised as experts in those fields,

be inspired to read widely and broadly, and increase their research capacity by actively participating in their *circle of collaboration*. This system will enhance their motivation and determination to increase their efficiency and improve their overall performance.

The other benefit is that the learners will not be dependent on one teacher for the development of their reading skills. Since teachers facilitate the development of reading skills differently, learners will be in a privileged position to enjoy different perspectives and viewpoints from a diverse range of teachers. This system should reduce unnecessary teacher and learner absenteeism and enhance better working relationships amongst teachers.

Naturally, adopting this guideline will bring some change to the way things are currently done. There is a possibility that this system may be met with resistance from certain quarters, and it may impact on reshuffling of human, physical and financial resources. There may be a need to appoint more staff members, timetabling may present a challenge, and experts may be needed to provide support and guidance. However, if the DoE in the Free State Province is serious about improving the quality of reading at the FP they should seriously consider implementing this recommendation.

10.3.5 Guideline 5: Teachers must use the lesson plan template to plan and present the lesson showing progression of the developmental phases of the lesson

The implementation of GL 5 made teachers aware that lesson planning is another significant aspect in facilitating the development of reading skills. However, only a few teachers seem to have understood the significance of having a well thought out lesson plan as a prerequisite for effective facilitation. During the intervention, the teachers prepared very well for the presentation of their lessons but made no written preparation. Written lesson plans would have improved the teachers' facilitative role and would have helped the teachers to translate what they had written in the plan into practice. For instance, if the teachers had written down the questions they were going to ask the learners during each phase of the lesson they would have

encouraged and stimulated their thinking. They would have been able to reflect on the how the lesson had progressed by referring to the lesson plan.

The quality of the lesson plans submitted with the journals was not good. The majority of teachers showed reluctance to write out lesson plans, indicating lesson planning as an area that still requires attention in facilitating the development of reading skills. The teachers' reluctance to write out lesson plans might have stemmed from lack of understanding of how it must be done.

RECOMMENDATION 5

In the report of the *Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement*, the panel recommends that lesson plan development should be at the teacher's discretion and teachers should be encouraged to use good textbooks and teacher guides for planning purposes (DoE, 2009:28). The findings in my study indicate that teachers have serious problems with regard to lesson planning and need further guidance and support to be able to improve on this aspect of their facilitative role. Having a lesson plan is a necessity, especially for novice and inexperienced teachers. It enhances the quality of teaching and learning experiences for both the teacher and the learners and is an integral part of a teacher's professional development, especially when considering the spate of curriculum streamlining and refinements that have dominated the FP curriculum since 1998. For instance, the DoE, through the launch of the FfLC, reinforced the significance of lesson planning by releasing four documents, per term, which contain exemplars of lesson plans (DoE, 2008b, c, d, e). These documents provide guidelines on how teachers should plan their lessons for the first, second, third and fourth term in Grade 1 within the context of the FfLC. The *Report of the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement* (DoE, 2009:25) also supports the notion that teachers should focus on lesson planning. However, this study reveals that the availability of these documents did not help the teachers greatly, probably because teachers were still sceptical about the policy documents, and they were compiled in English.

On the basis of the above, I recommend that teachers be encouraged and motivated to perceive the curriculum streamlining and refinements as opportunities for growth and development. These curriculum improvements require the teachers to think anew of their practice, how to organise the learning experiences of their learners and how to reflect those experiences into the lesson plans. I also recommend that these teachers come together to share knowledge and skills on how to plan lessons. They may request the expertise of the learning facilitators and some of the lecturers who participated in the study for help. I have evidence that when teachers are motivated and eager to perform any duty or task they do so with commitment and dedication. However, they need to have a plan of when, how and who will guide them in this endeavour.

10.3.6 Guideline 6: Teachers must demonstrate how they facilitate the five components of developing reading, with emphasis on phonemic awareness in context

Guideline 6 was the most difficult to be implemented because the findings in this study point to the teachers not possessing sufficient subject knowledge. This was evident in the results from the *pre- and post-intervention tests* as well as some of the lessons (Chapter 8:8.2 & Chapter 9:9.3.1). It seems as if the teachers were under the impression that there was a fixed one-to-one relationship between letter and sound, e.g., the sound [p] can be represented by the letter **p**. Their knowledge of the components of developing reading was very superficial and there was a serious problem in facilitating the development of phonemic awareness.

Evidently, the statement above explains Snow's (2011:2-3) premise that facilitating the development of reading skills is not an easy undertaking. She bases her argument on the requirement for teachers to have substantial knowledge about language, reading, teaching practices and procedures relevant to facilitating the development of phonemic and phonological awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. On the one hand, she asserts that it is not practical to send back all experienced teachers who possess procedural knowledge about the teaching practice to colleges for retraining. Rather, newly qualified teachers who possess declarative knowledge need the expertise of the more experienced

teachers. As confirmed by the findings of my study, it therefore follows that both experienced and inexperienced teachers must work together to improve on the different types of knowledge they possess in facilitating the development of reading skills.

RECOMMENDATION 6

On the basis of guideline 6, I reiterate recommendation 3, which encourages the SMTs to buy books which teachers must read in order to enhance their knowledge base and keep abreast of recent developments in the field of reading. For guideline 6, I recommend another set of books, *Reading under control. Teaching reading in the primary school*. (Graham & Kelly, 2008); and *Preventing reading difficulties in young children* (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). In addition, the teachers must continue to read the policy document *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. Foundation Phase Grade R-3 Sesotho Home Language* (DoBE. 2011b). In recommending these books I am not suggesting that they are the only relevant ones available, and the teachers can use their own discretion and find other books that are still relevant. The underlying recommendation is that teachers read widely.

Since the teachers' performance in the *pre-* and *post-intervention test* was very poor and the lessons revealed some misconceptions, it can be concluded that they need more expert guidance and support in enhancing their subject knowledge of Sesotho, especially in phonology and morphology. The former focuses on the sound patterns of the language and the latter on the word structure. The teachers need intensive formal training in the form of several focused workshops. The content should cover some of the aspects included in the curriculum for pre-service teachers at the University in African Languages. In this case, I recommend they draw on the expertise of the lecturers at Faculty of Education (School of Social Sciences and Language Education), the Faculty of Humanities (African Languages), and some of the learning facilitators from the DoE to present the workshops.

10.3.7 Guideline 7: Teachers must use academic language to facilitate the development of reading skills to bridge the gap between home, non-specialised knowledge and school, specialised knowledge

In implementing Guideline 7, the teachers began to understand the value of using academic Sesotho in facilitating the development of reading skills. In so doing they introduce their learners to specialised, school knowledge which represents specific concepts. The teachers can use home, non-specialised knowledge as a basis for introducing learners to formal concepts, necessary for them to build new concepts on the basis of their experiences. Their home knowledge provides a framework against which the teachers can make examples for clarification and help learners to apply learning. Exposing learners to specialised school knowledge enhances their development of concepts and thinking, by using more advanced concepts. The more the teachers use academic language in developing the learners' reading skills the more systematic they become in their approach and the more they create possibilities for knowledge transfer to other languages. According to Taylor (cited in Hoadley & Jansen, 2002:137) specialised school knowledge helps learners to "gain access to the forms of knowledge and discourse that will open up higher levels of learning and provide gateways to the increasingly technical nature of work today".

The teachers began to use the linguistic concepts such as *dinoko* (syllables), *modumo* (sound) and *tlhaku* (letter). In the past they refrained from using these concepts in Sesotho because they believed that they were too difficult for the learners. They also began to introduce the concepts such as *bonngwe le bongata* (singular and plural form) in lesson 2 (Chapter 8:8.5.2), *botona le botshehadi* (masculine and feminine gender) in lesson 22 (Chapter 8:8.7.4) and *matshwao a padiso* (punctuation marks) in lesson 4 (Chapter 8:8.5.4). In lesson 22 (Chapter 8:8.7.4) the teacher encouraged learners to use specialised Sesotho family words such as *mmangwane* (aunt) instead of the endearment word *mamane*, *mme* (mother) instead of *mama*, and *ntate* (father) instead of *papa*.

This guideline also encouraged the teachers to be conscious of the vocabulary they intended to develop in the lesson. For instance, in lesson 14 (Chapter 8:8.6.2), T2D introduced the names of the seasons and their calendar months and focused on

those which begin with the letter **p**. The teachers consciously selected the words they wanted to introduce to the learners, including sight words and new words. This behaviour encouraged teachers to prepare in advance the flashcards, posters and other resources they needed to develop the learners' vocabulary.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Since most teachers are aware of the significance of implementing this guideline, they need to sustain the momentum. I therefore recommend that in their *circle of collaboration* the teachers share ideas on how they can enhance their academic language and improve on the implementation of this guideline in facilitating the development of reading skills. Together they must draw up plans of how they will read the Sesotho policy documents and the teachers' guides, with the purpose of familiarising themselves with the official Sesotho written in the policy documents and to begin to use that language in their facilitative role. Since the DoE (2009) recommends the use of textbooks and teachers' guides, these must also be read in groups, where teachers can share knowledge and skills for the implementation.

10.3.8 Guideline 8: Teachers must use Sesotho HL in facilitating the development of their learners' reading skills

The teachers who were Sesotho Home Language speakers were enthusiastic about implementing this guideline in facilitating the development of reading skills, but those who were not seemed to embrace the idea, due to children being bombarded with environmental print, predominantly in English and especially in urban areas, promoting vocabulary development of English words. This phenomenon disadvantages the Sesotho speaking children and those who speak other African languages by elevating the status of English above them.

This strong influence of English from the learners' cultural background makes it easy for children to pick up the English concepts of colour, counting, foodstuffs, clothing, cars and different public institutions such as hospitals, police stations, home affairs offices, and schools. Since this is part of the language that the children bring into the classrooms it becomes the teacher's responsibility to make them aware that the use

of English words cannot replace the Sesotho words. For instance, when the teachers did the *picture walk* they asked learners to identify the people on the cover page of the Big Book, and say what they thought those people were doing and wearing, as well as to identify the colours in the pictures. When the learners responded in English the teachers often encouraged and reminded them to use Sesotho words. In insisting on the use of Sesotho, the teachers inspired the learners to take pride in using it, thus strengthening their concept formation and ability to construct meaning.

Conversely, those teachers whose mother tongue was not Sesotho experienced some problems in implementing this guideline. The two who were Setswana mother tongue speakers frequently made use of Setswana words and phrases when they facilitated the development of reading skills. They had a double task to minimise the influence of English the learners acquired in their environment and Setswana they picked up from interacting with her (Chapter 8:8.5.8). The implementation of this guideline required effort for both the teachers and the learners as they consciously developed their Sesotho vocabulary.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Language in Education Policy of the DoE (Republic of South Africa Department of Education (RSA DoE) *Government Notice* No. 383, Vol. 17997:1997) promotes and develops multilingualism and respects all the official languages used in South Africa. In line with this policy, the DoE (2002b:5) recommends the use of the learner's home language as a LoLT at the FP, so the selected Grade 1 teachers in this study must be aware that they play a significant role in the development of Sesotho as an official language and LoLT. In using Sesotho Home Language in facilitating the development of reading skills, the teachers become change agents who ensure that the learners acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in the same way as those learners who are taught in English Home Language (DoE, 2009:41). The teachers need to be aware that their success in using Sesotho Home Language may contribute toward helping Sesotho acquire the status as language of learning and of scholarship at institutions of higher learning (Republic of South Africa Department of Higher Education and Training (RSA DoHET) *Government Gazette* No. 35028, Vol. 560 :2012).

I therefore recommend that the teachers, including those whose mother tongue is not Sesotho but who facilitate the development of reading skills in Sesotho, utilise their *expert group* to improve their Sesotho usage and use. It is important for teachers to validate the vocabulary they intend to develop with their learners on a daily basis. I also recommend that the teachers read Sesotho books, magazines and newspapers to enhance their Sesotho use and usage. The National Reading Strategy, which was promoted by the *Drop All And Read (DAAR)*, should be revived. The teachers, in their collaborative group, must discuss the successful implementation of *DAAR* and find better ways of applying it in the enhancement of *Independent Reading*. This will be another motivating factor for the schools to buy more reading books. Difficult as it may seem, parental involvement is critical (Chapter 6:6.2.3.4). The teachers, in their collaborative group, need to explore ways and means to involve parents as partners in developing the learners' reading skills.

10.3.9 Guideline 9: Teachers must learn how to handle large classes

One of the findings which emerged from the in-depth situation analysis was overcrowding, which impacted negatively on facilitating the development of the learners' reading skills (Chapter 6:6.2.3.2; 6.3.1.6). Teacher absenteeism exacerbated the problem in the sense that when one teacher was absent her learners were placed equally in classrooms in which the teachers were present. This created discipline problems. However, in 2011, the situation at the two schools gradually improved. In School B, the enrolment of Grade 1 learners was greatly reduced when parents requested their children be transferred to a new primary school, which was closer to their homes. At School D, the number decreased when a new Grade 1 teacher was appointed. In the meantime, the teachers were already in the process of training some of their advanced learners as group leaders to oversee group activities. This was a strategy to handle large classes.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The problem of overcrowding in the Grade 1 classrooms was indirectly resolved as explained in Chapter 9 (9.2.4.9). However, the issue of handling large classes still needs attention. I recommend that the teachers use their *collaborative group* to share

knowledge and skills pertaining to handling large classes. There are various resources they can consult to stimulate discussions around the topic and to find solutions. I also recommend that teachers share knowledge and skills about how to apply group work effectively and how they can train some of their learners as group leaders. The group leaders must be used to oversee group work activities and to control the use of pencils, erasers and sharpeners, and to have proper control in the classroom.

10.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

One of the categories which emerged from the in-depth situation analysis highlighted problems related to learners. The problems identified by the teachers were that some learners do not read what is in the book. Some learners are not Sesotho Home Language speakers and for some learners the teachers feel they are forcing them to read. Another problem identified was learner absenteeism. Some of the learners' problems were only partially addressed in the intervention because this study focused on the facilitative role of the teachers in the development of reading skills.

10.4.1 Learners who do not read what is in the book

As the teachers started with lesson presentations I gained new insight into why some learners do not read what is in the book. The root of the problem lies in the learners not having reading books in the classrooms, as a consequent, very little reading takes place in the classrooms. With little reinforcement from home their phonemic awareness is not well developed and the teachers themselves have a problem facilitating its development. As a result, on the one hand, learners resort to memorising the letters, syllables and words. On the other hand, teachers are under severe pressure to assist each learner to develop reading skills, even when the learner appears reluctant to reciprocate the teacher's initiatives. There must be reasons, so I recommend that this problem receives attention as a topic for further research.

10.4.2 Learners who are not Sesotho Home Language speakers

The Grade 1 classrooms are multilingual and multicultural because the learners speak different home languages and come from diverse cultural backgrounds. The DoE (2002:4) supports the policy of an additive approach to multilingualism. The teaching of languages is offered as Home Language (HL), First Additional Language (FAL) and Second Additional Language (SAL). The DoE further stipulates that each learner must learn her/his HL and at least one additional official language. It is assumed that the FAL is English or Afrikaans. However, this policy does not accommodate FP learners who use an African home language different from the one used as a LoLT, for instance Setswana or isiXhosa (Messerschmidt, 2003:104). The learners whose HL is Setswana or isiXhosa are entitled to be taught in their home language, thus creating a problem for teachers in terms of how they should facilitate the development of reading skills in Sesotho. I recommend further research into this problem.

10.4.3 Parental involvement

Parental involvement also emerged as a category. Parents play a crucial role in literacy development of their children (Lapp & Flood, 1986; Mmotlane, Winnaar & Kivilu, 2009; Pressley, 2001; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998; Vacca *et al.*, 2003). At schools, the teachers formalise and advance the initiatives for literacy development already started by the parents at home. It is therefore important for the teachers to maintain the link between their role and that of the parents in advancing the development of literacy at schools. However, I did not address the problem of lack of parental involvement in this study because the focus was on how teachers facilitate the development of reading skills in the classrooms. Nonetheless, teachers in their *circle of collaboration* must explore different avenues and decide on strategies to involve the parents in their children's reading development. The problem of learner absenteeism is closely related to parental involvement, and may be reduced when parents and learners see the value of attending school on a daily basis. This problem needs further research into how it influences the facilitative role of the teachers in the development of reading skills.

10.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

My study aimed to bridge the gap between the theory and practice of facilitating the development of reading skills. The intervention was based on information gathered from a literature review and the findings of the in-depth situation analysis. However, the focus was predominantly on the practical component of the in-depth situation analysis. In retrospect, the teachers should have written the *pre-intervention test* during the in-depth situation analysis to inform the direction of the intervention. However, I delayed the *pre-intervention test* so that I could first build rapport with the teachers and win their trust and co-operation (Chapter 5:5.8). Some of the theoretical aspects, such as understanding the concepts *reading* and *reading processes*, received some attention at the workshop (Chapter 7:7.2.5). The teachers also demonstrated how they facilitated the development of vocabulary and aspects of grammar such as singular and plural form and comprehension (Chapter 8:8.5.2). Nonetheless, dealing with the theoretical knowledge pertaining to the five components of facilitating the development of reading skills was not deep enough. The magnitude of the problem associated with facilitating these components of reading skills, especially with regard to phonics and phonemic awareness, manifested during the intervention. I was unprepared for this finding.

In Chapter 3, I discussed various approaches, such as *top down*, *bottom up*, *interactive*, *language experience* and *text-based*, which teachers could use in facilitating the development of reading skills. The facilitation of the development of reading skills by means of the Big Books provides opportunities for teachers to use a combination of the bottom-up and top down (interactive) approaches, thus allowing them to do letter and sound recognition activities as well as meaning-giving activities such as retelling text contents. To some extent, T1D, T2D and T1B, applied some of the approaches in facilitating the development of reading skills. Reflecting on how the teachers developed phonemic awareness prior to and during the intervention leads to an understanding that the teachers are more inclined towards the bottom up approach than the top down approach. They still focused on helping learners to recognise letters and sounds in order to understand the meaning conveyed by the author, however, the intervention did not adequately address these approaches. A guideline addressing the different approaches would have made the teachers more

conscious of the use of these approaches in facilitating the development of reading skills.

10.6 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

When the teachers embarked on this study to improve their facilitative role in developing their learners' reading skills, it was with mixed feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and excitement (Chapter 5:5.9). They were sceptical about how my involvement with them would be any better than previous involvement with learning facilitators and other role players. The reason was that they were waiting with apprehension for another impending curriculum change, CAPS, which was to be implemented in 2011, while they were still struggling with the implementation of the FfLC. Having reassured them of our mutual participation between a researcher from the University and the practitioners in the teaching profession, the teachers looked forward to the new partnership and the promise of a new experience. At the onset of study they enjoyed constant support, motivation and guidance. As they participated in the in-depth situation analysis, and in the intervention, they reciprocated by a show of commitment, dedication and eagerness, gradually leading to an improvement in their facilitative role in the development of the learners' reading skills.

In spite of the stimulation and encouragement invested in the study to assist the selected grade teachers to improve on their facilitative role, the problem of bridging the gap between theory and practice is still prevalent. The teachers' participation in the workshop and the *pre-intervention test* proved that their theoretical knowledge base was very poor. However, their participation in the intervention provided enough evidence to validate claims to improvement in the practical component. The implementation of the guidelines, assessment of the lessons, the journals, the post-intervention test and the epiphanic moments bear evidence of this improvement.

The most important finding is that, in spite of their abject circumstances, the teachers thrive on continuous support, motivation and guidance to function at the maximum level. Continual enhancement of the teachers' knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, brings about harmony in their cognitive, affective and psychomotor levels of functioning. The teachers' participation in the study has enhanced their confidence as teachers, as facilitators and as professionals. The principal and the HoD, who

observed the teachers' performance in Spiral Cycle 3, also noticed a marked improvement in the way the teachers presented their lessons, providing evidence of how they improved their facilitative role in developing reading skills. Once the teachers can experience continuous support, motivation and guidance from the SMTs, the principals, learning facilitators and other officials from the DoE, they can actually become change agents in improving their practice and their facilitative role in the development not only of reading skills but also other skills.

The passion for reading is ignited when books are available for the teachers and the learners. Since the University had sponsored Grade 1 teachers and learners at Schools B and D with reading books, the delivery of those prior to the commencement of the intervention was an epiphanic moment. Although there is a dire need for reading books at the schools in all the grades the small gesture was welcomed by both teachers and learners with excitement and a sense of pride. It felt like a promise of a new beginning for learners and teachers as readers. I observed this excitement about the Big Books and the Small Books when the teachers presented their lessons. Indeed, this is the kind of emotion that should be the driving force in facilitating the development of reading skills at Grade 1. However, it must be noted that the University is under no obligation to buy reading books for the schools, rather it is the responsibility of the DoE to exhaust the funds allocated for the advancement of education by buying reading books for the schools. While the teachers perform their duties under poverty-stricken circumstances and suffer from extreme shortage of reading books, the DoE is reported not to have spent its allocation of R600 million in the 2011 financial year (*Volksblad*, Monday, 03/10/2011:7).

Once ignited, the passion for reading needs to be sustained. T2D, for example, is a role model of the quality of teachers needed at Grade 1. Passionate about reading, she kindles in her learners the excitement about reading from the Big Book and of holding a Small Book in their hands, of paging through the book, reading the story and understanding its meaning. The Grade 1 learners need a teacher who will motivate and inspire them to develop an understanding about books, the author, publication date, and the concepts used in reading stories, such as characters, setting, plot structure, the theme, and imagery in stories, such as metaphors. Grade

1 learners need a teacher who will model the joy derived from reading a book and understand the meaning the author is trying to convey so that they can be motivated to understand if the letters, words and sentences in the story actually represent the ideas of the author. If all Grade 1 learners could be assigned such teachers it would make the purchase of books a worthwhile expenditure.

The recommendation to buy reading books and reference books strengthens the notion of teachers as readers. When teachers and their learners are reading they would be living up to the expectation that says “to read is to empower, to empower is to write, to write is to influence, to influence is to change, to change is to live” (DoE, 2008i).

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APPENDIX A

FREE STATE PROVINCE



Ref no: 16/4/1/.....
FS460C

APPLICATION FORM TO REGISTER RESEARCH PROJECTS IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- ❖ Please complete all the sections of this form that are applicable to you. If any section is not applicable please indicate this by writing N/A.
- ❖ If there are too few lines in any of the sections please attach the additional information as an addendum.
- ❖ Attach all the required documentation so that your application can be processed.

Send the application to:

Director: Quality Assurance

Room 401
Syfrets Building

Free State Department of Education
Private Bag X20565
Bloemfontein
9300.

Tel: 4048750/4048658
Fax: 447 7318

1 **Title** (eg Mr, Ms, Dr, Prof):

M	S		
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2 **Initials and surname:**

M	J		R	A	M	A	B	E	N	Y	A	N	E		
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3 **Telephone:** Home:

0	5	1	-	4	3	5	3	6	2	4	
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Work:

Cell: 0 5 1 - 4 0 1 2 6 3 9
Fax: 0 8 3 - 4 6 9 5 6 6 6
E-Mail: 0 5 1 - 4 0 1 9 4 5 6
r A m - a B e n y a n E
mj@ufs.ac.za

4 Home Address:

1	0	9	0	1		M	O	H	L	A	B	I				
R	O	C	K	L	A	N	D	S								
													9	3	2	3

5 Postal Address:

P	O		B	O	X		I	6	0	8	41					
M	A	N	G	A	U	N	G									
													9	3	0	7

6.1 Name of tertiary institution/research institute

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

6.2 Occupation: LECTURER

6.3 Place of employment: UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

7 Name of course: Ph. D.

8 Name of supervisor/promoter: PROF J .J. E. MESSERSCHMIDT

Name of co-supervisor/promoter: DR K. E. KHABANYANE

Please attach a **letter from your supervisor** confirming that you have registered for the course you are following.

9 Title of research project:

THE FACILITATIVE ROLE OF GRADE 1 TEACHERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS IN SESOTHO

10 Concise explanation of the research topic:

The research seeks to establish the way in which teachers teach reading at Grade 1 where Sesotho is taught as Home Language and used as language of learning and teaching within the context of Outcomes-based Education. The aim is to assist teachers to improve on how they teach reading with the view of improving the learners reading skills. As co-participants in the study, through Emancipatory action research, teachers will also take ownership of the process of improving the teaching of reading while they also affirm themselves in the pedagogy of reading and teaching reading.

11 Application value that the research may have for the Free State Education

Department:

- a. The research will enable teachers to think and reflect on their experiences in teaching reading in terms of what, why and how they teach reading.
- b. The research will equip teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes which will enhance the teachers' confidence and competency in teaching reading at Grade 1
- c. The study hopes to add to the body of scientific knowledge pertaining to the teaching of reading by designing guidelines that will enhance the facilitative role of teachers and testing them.
- d. When teachers are empowered to develop the learners' reading ability and competence, it is once more hoped that this research will have responded to the national cry to help learners to learn to read.
- e. The study will also identify areas that could be targeted for further research.

12.1 The full particulars of the group with whom the research is to be undertaken:

The research will involve selected Grade 1 teachers in some schools in the Motheo District, Free State province.

12.2 List of schools/Directorates in the Department/Officials:

4 Primary schools where Sesotho is taught as a Home Language and is used as Language of Learning and Teaching in the Motheo District, Free State province.

Maboloka Primary School

Lesedi Primary School

Mothusi Primary School

Karabelo Primary School

12.3 Grades: Grade 1 teachers

12.4 Age and gender groups:

The group will comprise both male and female Grade 1 teachers irrespective of their age.

12.5 Language groups:

Grade 1 teachers using Sesotho Home language in the Motheo District

12.6 Numbers to be involved in the research project:

All the Grade 1 teachers at the 4 schools identified. Each school has a maximum of 4 teachers per Grade 1, which totals to 12.

13 Full particulars of how information will be obtained eg questionnaires, interviews, standardized tests. Please include copies of questionnaires, questions that will be asked during interviews, tests that will be completed or any other relevant documents regarding the acquisition of information.

- a. Observations in Grade 1 classrooms.
- b. Interviews will also be conducted with 16 teachers (4 per school).

- 14** The **starting and completion dates** of the research project: (Please bear in mind that research is usually not allowed to be conducted in the schools during the fourth term.)
The researcher intends to start off with an in-depth situation analysis when the schools reopen after the Easter Holidays. It is envisaged that the actual data collection will be conducted during the months of April and May and July 2010.
- 15** Will the research be conducted **during or after school hours**?
The interviews will be conducted after school hours. The observation will be done during school hours.
- 16** If it is necessary to use school hours for the research project, **how much time** will be needed?
1 hour per week/ per school for two months. This brings to a total of 32 hours. The rationale behind the 32 hours is because of the nature of the action research to be undertaken with teachers as co-participants.
- 17** **How much time will be spent on the research project** by individual educators and/or learners?
Group interviews will be conducted per school, after school hours, for 30 minutes and the other 30 minutes will be for observations. The one hour will be divided between the interviews and the observations.
- 18** **Have you included?**
- 18.1 A letter from **your supervisor** confirming your registration for the course you are following? Yes/No
- 18.2 A draft of the letter that will be sent **to the principals** requesting permission to conduct research In their schools? Yes/No
- 18.3 A draft of the letter that will be sent **to parents** requesting permission for their children to participate in the research project?.(If applicable) Yes/No
- 18.4 Copies of **questionnaires** that you wish to distribute? Yes/No
- 18.5 A list of **questions** that will be asked during the interviews? Yes/No

I confirm that all the information given on this form is correct.

.....
SIGNATURE

.....
DATE

APPENDIX B

Private Bag X20565
BLOEMFONTEIN
9300

Dear Sir / Madam

REGISTRATION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

I hereby confirm that Ms. Mamosebatho Julia Ramabenyane (student number 2001108931) is a registered Ph.D. student at the University of the Free State in the Faculty of Education in the Department of Curriculum Studies.

The student is currently conducting research in the teaching of reading at the Foundation Phase. The title of her thesis is: ***The facilitative role of Grade 1 teachers in the development of reading skills in Sesotho.*** This research study will enable the student to provide assistance to Grade 1 teachers on how to improve current practices in teaching reading with the view of improving the learners reading skills. It is further hoped that this research study will add to the body of scientific knowledge pertaining to the teaching of reading by designing guidelines that will enhance the facilitative role of teachers and testing them.

Kindest regards

J. J. E. Messerschmidt
Prof J.J.E. Messerschmidt

Promoter

APPENDIX C



education
Department of
Education
FREE STATE PROVINCE

Enquiries : IM Malimane
Reference no. : 16/4/1/09-2010

Tel: 0514048862
Fax: 051 4477316

2010-03-17

Mr. B TLADI
Director: Motheo Education District
Room 413
Jubilee Building
Bloemfontein

Dear Mr Tladi

NOTIFICATION OF A RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR DISTRICT

Please find attached copy of the letter giving Ms. MJ RAMABENYANE permission to conduct research in sampled schools in the Motheo Education District. She will conduct her research involving educators and learners.

Yours sincerely


FR SELLO
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE

Directorate: Quality Assurance
Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein, 9300
Syfrets Center, 65 Maitland Street, Bloemfontein
Tel: 051 404 8750 / Fax: 051 447 7316
E-mail: quality@edu.fs.gov.za

www.fs.gov.za



Enquiries: Maimane IM
Reference: 164/108-2010

Tel: 051 404 8662
Fax: 051 447 7318
E-mail: maimane@edu.fs.gov.za

2010 – 03 – 17

Ms. MJ RAMABENYANE
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

Dear Ms. Ramabenyane.

REGISTRATION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

1. This letter is in reply to your application for the registration of your research project.
2. Research topic: **The Facilitative Role of Grade 1 Teachers in the Development of Reading Skills in Sesotho.**
3. Your research project has been registered with the Free State Education Department
4. Approval is granted under the following conditions:-
 - 4.1 Educators and Learners participate voluntarily in the project.
 - 4.2 The names of the schools and participants involved remain confidential.
 - 4.3 The questionnaires are completed and the interviews are conducted outside normal tuition time.
 - 4.4 This letter is shown to all participating persons.
 - 4.5 A bound copy of the report and a summary on a computer disc on this study is donated to the Free State Department of Education.
 - 4.6 Findings and recommendations are presented to relevant officials in the Department.
5. The costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.
6. You are requested to confirm acceptance of the above conditions in writing to:

The Head: Education, for attention: DIRECTOR : QUALITY ASSURANCE
Room 401, Syfrets Building, Private Bag X20565, BLOEMFONTEIN, 9301

We wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely


FR SELLO
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE

Directorate: Quality Assurance, Private Bag X20565 Bloemfontein, 9300
Syfrets Center, 65 Maitland Street, Bloemfontein
Tel: 051 404 8750 / Fax: 051 447 7318 E-mail: quality@edu.fs.gov.za

www.education.gov.za

APPENDIX D

16 March 2010

Dear Sir / Madam

RE: REQUESTING PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am a Ph. D. student at the University of the Free State. Part of the requirements for my degree is to conduct an empirical study which serves to complement the theoretical component of the study.

The title of my thesis is: **The facilitative role of Grade 1 teachers in the development of reading skills in Sesotho.** The main purpose of the study is to determine what the current practices are in the teaching of reading at Grade1. The intention is to assist teachers to improve on how they teach reading with the view of improving the learners reading skills. As co-participants in the study, through Emancipatory action research, teachers will also take ownership of the process of improving the teaching of reading. In the process teachers also affirm themselves in the pedagogy of reading and teaching reading. Data collection will be in the form of observations of how teaching of reading is taking place and by interviews with Grade 1 teachers.

I thank you in advance

Yours faithfully

Ramabenyane, M. J.

Lecturer
Department of Curriculum Studies
PO Box 339
University of the Free State
Bloemfontein
South Africa
Tel. No.: +27-51-4012639 E-mail: ramabenyanemj@ufs.ac.za

APPENDIX E

16 March 2010

Dear Parents / Guardians

RE: REQUESTING PERMISSION TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO TAKE PART IN THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED AT THE SCHOOL

I am a Ph. D. student at the University of the Free State. Part of the requirements for my degree is to conduct an empirical study which serves to complement the theoretical component of the study.

The title of my thesis is: ***The facilitative role of Grade 1 teachers in the development of reading skills in Sesotho.*** The main purpose of the study is to determine what the current practices are in the teaching of reading at Grade1. The intention is to assist teachers to improve on how they teach reading with the view of improving the learners reading skills. Since learner participation plays a significant role in the study, your child will be observed as to how s/he learns how to read. Data collection will be in the form of observations of how teaching of reading is taking place and by interviews with Grade 1 teachers and the learners.

I thank you in advance
Yours faithfully

Ramabenyane, M. J.
Lecturer

Department of Curriculum Studies
PO Box 339
University of the Free State
Bloemfontein
South Africa
Tel. No.: +27-51-4012639

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **The questions to be asked will be based on the following objectives of the research study:**
 - To reflect on how Grade 1 teachers facilitate reading in order to identify problem areas.
 - **How do you teach reading?**
 - **What approaches, methods and activities do you use in teaching reading?**
 - **Are there any specific problem areas?**
 - **How can these problems be addressed?**
 - To develop an assessment instrument to measure the teachers' progress.
 - **What instrument can be used to enable Grade 1 teachers to assess the learners' competence in reading?**
 - To formulate guidelines that will assist Grade 1 teachers to improve facilitation of reading.
 - **Which guidelines can be used to ensure that Grade 1 teachers are improving the teaching of reading?**
 - To implement the guidelines.
 - **How can these guidelines be implemented?**
 - To assess the implementation of the guidelines and repeat the cycle if necessary.
 - **How effective are the guidelines?**
 - **What changes have been brought about by the guidelines?**
 - **Is there a need to repeat the cycle?**
2. The questions above will be further be broken down as follows:
 - What do you do when you teach reading?
 - How do you go about teaching reading? Describe.
 - What activities do you do with the learners when you teach reading?

- What do you use when you teach reading?
- What documents do you have which guide/inform your teaching of reading?
- How do you see when learners can read?
- What do learners do who can read?
- Which abilities do good readers have/show?
- What do you like best about teaching reading?
- What are some of the best practices that work for you in teaching reading?
- Do you teach reading as a Grade1team or individually?
- What is it that you do not like about teaching reading?
- What problems do you experience in teaching reading?
- How do these problems impact on the teaching of reading?
- How can these problems be addressed?
- How do you identify learners who can read at the beginning of Grade 1?

The questions above are targeted at gathering information for the in-depth situation analysis of the study.

3. The next questions are intended to help the researcher to embark on the action research.
 - What do you suggest can be done to improve the teaching at reading?
 - Who must be involved in this process?
 - What do you need to start the process of improving the teaching of reading?
 - Which guidelines can be used to improve teaching of reading?
 - Who must formulate these guidelines?
 - How can these guidelines be formulated?
 - How can these guidelines be integrated in the teaching of reading?
 - How effective are these guidelines?
 - What changes are brought about through the implementation of these guidelines?

APPENDIX G

PRE-INTERVENTION TEST AND THE MEMORANDUM

DATE: 27/05/2011

MARKS [30]

POTSO YA PELE [QUESTION 1]

1. *Hlalosa mareo ana o be o fana ka mohlala o le mong* [Explain the following concepts and provide an example in each case.]

1.1 *Diphetho (Outcomes)*

Di kgothaletsa tsamaiso thutong e tsepamisitsweng ho moithuti le e behilweng hodima diketsahalo. Ke ditabatabelo tseo moithuti a tswanetseng ho di fihlella tshebetsona ya ho ithuta ka ho bontsha kutlwisiso ya dikahare tsa thuto.

1.2 *Diphetho tse hlokolosi* [Critical Outcomes]

Di ntshitswe Molaotheong ho hlalosa mofuta wa moahi eo tsamaiso ya thuto le thupelo e lokelang ho ikemisetsa ho mmopa.

1.3 *Diphetho tsa ho ithuta puo* [Learning Outcomes Languages]

Di theilwe hodima diphetho tse hlokolosi le tsa ntshetsopele ho hlalosa seo moithuti a lokelang ho se tseba, ho se bontsha le ho kgona ho se etsa qetellong ya mokhahlelo wa Thuto le Thupelo e Akaretsang.

1.4 *Maemo a tekolo* [Assessment Standards]

A hlalosa bophahamo boo ka bona baithuti ba lokelang ho bontsha phihlelo ba diphetho kapa sephetho sa ho ithuta le ditsela kapa mekgwa (botebo le bophara) ba ho bontsha phihlelo ya bona. A qohollehile bakeng sa sehlopha ka seng mme a bontsha ka moo kgatelopele e tla etsahalang ka teng Tikolohong ya ho lthuta.

1.5 *Dikatileho* [Milestones]

Di theilwe hodima diphetho le mananeo a tekolo ho bontsha dikgatelopele tseo moithuti a ka di fihlellang ho phethahatsa diphetho tsa ho ithuta le maemo a tekolo.

1.6 *Dinoko* [Syllables]

Di fumanwa ha ho nyalantshwa tumammoho le tumanosi ho bopa modumo o itseng mme di theilwe hodima dihlopha tsa mabitso.

1.7 Nyalano [Blends]

Ke ho bontsha hore medumo e bapileng (tumammoho le tumanosi) e ka bopa dinoko le mantswe jwaloka se- + fa+ -te = sefate

POTSO YA BOBEDI [QUESTION 2]

Ho bolelwa eng ka sebopeho sa dinoko? [What is meant by the structure of syllable?]

Ho bolelwa kamahano pakeng tsa tumammoho le tumanosi tse fumanwang lentsweng jk mo- + -tho = motho

POTSO YA BORARO [QUESTION 3]

Fana ka mehlala ya sebopeho sa dinoko tsena [Give examples of the following syllable structures.]

3.1 CVC: Di mmalwa dinoko tse tjena Sesothong. mohlala teng.

3.2 CVC: Tsa Afrikaanse di tjena, byvoorbeeld, kat.

3.3 CVC: Tsa Senyesemane di tjena, example, pot.

3.2 Mehlala ya CVCV: seha, bopa, roba jj

POTSO YA BONE [QUESTION 4]

Sebopeho sa dinoko tsa Sesotho ke sefe ho CVCV le CVC? (Which syllable structure is relevant for Sesotho between CVCV and CVC?)

Ke sa CVCV.

POTSO YA BOHLANO [QUESTION 5]

Tshehetsa karabo ya hao ho 4 (Support your answer in 4)

Dinoko tsa Sesotho di bonahala ka CVCV kaofela. Ha mohlomong senoko se seng se na le ditlhaku tse pedi tsa ditumamoho (digraph), ditlhaku tseo di buuwa e le modumo o le mong jk thapo, [th] ke modumo o le mong o ka arolwang ka ditlhaku tse pedi t le h.

POTSO YA BOTSHELELA [QUESTION 6]

Fana ka mehlala ya mabitso a sebediswang kgafetsa Sesothong. [Give examples of words frequently used in Sesotho.]

Mme, ntate, dijo, sefahleho, hlapa, tsamaya, ngwana, nama, papa, ke, nna, ntlo, roma, bua, tsheha jj

POTSO YA BOSUPA [QUESTION 7]

Bohlokwa ba tsebo eo o nang le yona ke bofe ha o bala? [What is the significance of prior knowledge?]

E thusa moithuti ho utlwisisa kapele, ha bobebe le haholo seo a se balang.

POTSO YA BOROBEDI [QUESTION 8]

Ke diketsahalo dife tse etsahalang ha moithuti a bala? [Which processes take place when a child is reading?]

Moithuti o:

- *Kgona ho tshwara buka hantle.* [Hold a book correctly.]
- *Kgona ho bala ho tswa letsohong le letshehadi ho ya le letona.* [Read from left to right.]
- *Kgona ho bona hore seo a se buang se ka fetolelwa ho se ngolwang.* [Become aware that speech can be converted into writing.]
- *Ellelwa hore ditlhaku di emetse medumo e itseng.* [Become aware that letters represent sounds.]
- *Ellelwa hore ditlhaku di bopa mantswe mme mantswe a na le moelelo.* [Become aware that letters blend to form words which have meaning.]
- *Kgona ho iphumanela moelelo ho ya ka tsebo eo a nang le yona mabapi le seo a balang.* [Construct meaning from her/his prior knowledge and knowledge about the topic s/he is reading about.]
- *Kgona ho nahana ka seo a se balang.* [**Think about what s/he is reading.**]
- *Kgona ho ema ha a na le bothata bo itseng mme a shebisise popeho ya mantswe ho utlwisisa seo a se balang.* [Stop when s/he does not understand and looks for semantic and syntactic cues in order to figure out the meanings.]
- *Kgona ho utlwisisa mantswe a matjha le ho nontsha tlotlontswe ya hae.* [Understand new words and build a rich vocabulary.]

POTSO YA BOROBONG

Ana ho a hlokahala hore moithuti a be le tsebo ka setso sa hahabo ha a ithuta ho bala? [**Is it necessary for a learner to be knowledgeable about her/his culture in developing reading skills?**]

Ee. Kutlwisiso ya moithuti e ba matla ha a bala ka dintho tseo a di phelang setsong sa hahabo. [**A learner understands better if s/he reads about things that familiar in her/his culture.**]

APPENDIX H

POST-INTERVENTION TEST AND THE MEMORANDUM

DATE: 19/10/2011

MARKS [30]

POTSO YA PELE [QUESTION 1]

1 *Hlalosa mareo ana o be o fana ka mohlala o le mong* [Explain the following concepts and provide an example in each case.]

1.1 *Sepheho (An Outcome)*

Se kgothaletsa tsamaiso thutong e tsepamisitsweng ho moithuti le e behilweng hodima diketsahalo. Ke ditabatabelo tseo moithuti a tswanetseng ho di fihlella tshebetsong ya ho ithuta ka ho bontsha kutlwisiso ya dikahare tsa thuto.

1.2 *Diphetho tsa ho ithuta puo* [Learning Outcomes Languages]

Di theilwe hodima diphetho tse hlokolosi le tsa ntshetsopele ho hlalosa seo moithuti a lokelang ho se tseba, ho se bontsha le ho kgona ho se etsa qetellong ya mokhahlelo wa Thuto le Thupelo e Akaretsang.

1.3 *Dikadleho* [Milestones]

Di theilwe hodima diphetho le mananeo a tekolo ho bontsha dikgatelopele tseo moithuti a ka di fihlellang ho phethahatsa diphetho tsa ho ithuta le maemo a tekolo.

1.4 *Sepheo sa thuto* [Lesson aim]

Ke seo titjhere a labalabelang hore baithuti ba hae ba se tsebe le ho se utlwisisa ka ho phetha diketso tse itseng ka phaposing ya thupelo mabapi le serutwa sa thuto ya letsatsi.

1.5 *Maikemisetso a thuto* [Lesson objectives]

Ke seo titjhere a labalabelang hore baithuti ba se fihlelle pheletsong ya thuto ya hae ho ya ka moo ba ka buwang, bontshang kapa ba etsang ho hong ho netefatsa hore ba utlwisisitse thuto ya letsatsi leo.

POTSO YA BOBEDI [QUESTION 2]

2.1 *Ke eng seo o se utlwisisang ka lereo lena 'ho bala'?* [What do you understand by the concept reading?]

Ho bala ke ketsahalo eo ho yona mmadi a kgonang ho elellwa ditlhaku le mantswa a ngotsweng le ho a qapodisa ka mokgwa o nepahetseng e le ho kgona ho fumana moelelo ho tswa ho seo a se balang mme a ntse a nyalana le tsebokutlwisiso ya hae.

2.2 *Ke diketsahalo dife tse etsahalang ha moithuti a bala?* [Which processes take place when a child is reading?]

Moithuti o:

- *Kgona ho tshwara buka hantle.* [Hold a book correctly.]
- *Kgona ho bala ho tswa letsohong le letshehadi ho ya le letona.* [Read from left to right.]
- *Kgona ho bona hore seo a se buang se ka fetolelwa ho se ngolwang.* [Become aware that speech can be converted into writing.]
- *Elellwa hore ditlhaku di emetse medumo e itseng.* [Become aware that letters represent sounds.]
- *Elellwa hore ditlhaku di bopa mantswa mme mantswa a na le moelelo.* [Become aware that letters blend to form words which have meaning.]
- *Kgona ho iphumanela moelelo ho ya ka tsebo eo a nang le yona mabapi le seo a balang.* [Construct meaning from her/his prior knowledge and knowledge about the topic s/he is reading about.]
- *Kgona ho nahana ka seo a se balang.* [Think about what s/he is reading.]
- *Kgona ho ema ha a na le bothata bo itseng mme a shebise popeho ya mantswa ho utlwisisa seo a se balang.* [Stop when s/he does not understand and looks for semantic and syntactic cues in order to figure out the meanings.]
- *Kgona ho utlwisisa mantswa a matjha le ho nontsha tlotlontswe ya hae.* [Understand new words and build a rich vocabulary.]

2.4 *Bohlokwa ba tsebo eo o nang le yona ke bofe ha o bala?* [What is the significance of prior knowledge?]

E thusa moithuti ho utlwisisa kapele, ha bobebe le haholo seo a se balang. Moithuti o kgona ho nyalana tsebo eo a nang le yona le eo a e fumanang ho tswa moo a balang.

2.4 *Bolela melemo e mmedi ya ho ithuta ho bala ka puo ya lapeng*

Kutlwisiso ya moithuti e ba matla ha a bala ka dintho tseo a di phelang setsong sa hahabo.

Ngwana o tlwaetse qapodiso ya medumo mme o kgona ho bala kapele mantswe a hlahang kgafetsa puong ya hae

POTSO YA BORARO [QUESTION 3]

3.1 *Fana ka mehlala ya sebopeho sa dinoko tsa Sesotho* [Give examples of the syllable structure of Sesotho.]

Mo- + tho= motho

Se + fa + te = sefate

8.7 *Fana ka mehlala e mmedi ya mantswe a nang le dinoko tse latelang:*

CVCV: seha, bopa, roba jj

CVC teng, mang

3.3 *Sebopeho sa dinoko tsa Sesotho se tlwaelehileng ke sefe ho CVCV le CVC?*
(Which syllable structure is applicable for Sesotho between CVCV and CVC?)

CVCV

3.4 *Ke mantswe afe ao sebopeho sa ona e leng mekgelo? Ofe (VCV)? Kae (CVV)*
Fana ka mehlala ya mabitso a sebediswang kgafetsa Sesothong. [Give examples of words frequently used in Sesotho.]

3.5 *Hlalosa ka mehlala hore na nyalano ya medumo ke eng?* [Explain blends in Sesotho]

Ke ho bontsha hore ditlhaku tse bapileng di ka bopa modumo o le mong

jwaloka mo + bo+ ne = mobone = mmone

3.6 *Fana ka mehlala ya mabitso a sebediswang kgafetsa Sesothong.* [Give examples of words frequently used in Sesotho.]

Mme, ntate, dijo, sefahleho, hlapa, tsamaya, ngwana, nama, papa, ke, nna, ntlo, roma, bua, tsheha jj