

EXPLORING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE CLASSROOMS

by

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DECLARATION

I, Mapule Yvonne Segooa, declare that EXPLORING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING READING IN FOUNDATION PHASE CLASSROOMS is my own work and all the sources I have consulted have been duly acknowledged in the citations as well as in the list of references. This work was not submitted for any degree at any other university.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late mother who played a significant role to guide me into who I am today, and who I will become tomorrow. I had hoped that God would grant her more years to see my dreams come true. My promise to her has come to pass. I will always love you, mom.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore teachers' experiences of teaching reading in Foundation Phase classrooms in terms of understanding their applications of strategies towards the successful teaching of reading. A qualitative research methodology was adopted in a case study design. Data was generated using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Teaching reading has been an ongoing challenge in Foundation Phase classrooms. The research study focused on three schools from different settlement areas in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. These findings revealed that teachers' classroom practice was not consistent with current best practice and the modern theories of teaching reading. This factor negatively affects their expertise in teaching reading using the CAPS (2011) recommended reading methodologies in general. The challenges faced by applying different reading methodologies might be the reason for learners' inability to achieve successful reading outcomes in the Foundation Phase classrooms.

Key words:

Challenges, Reading, Reading Components, Reading Methodologies, Teachers and Foundation Phase.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|---|
| ANA | Annual National Assessment |
| CAPS | Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement |
| CCCV | Consonant-Consonant-Consonant-Vowel |
| CV | Consonant-Vowel |
| CVC | Consonant-Vowel-Consonant |
| CVCVCV | Consonant-Vowel-Consonant-Vowel-Consonant-Vowel |
| DBESA | Department of Basic Education in South Africa |
| DBE | Department of Basic Education |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| ECD | Early Childhood Development |
| EFAL | English First Additional Language |
| EGRA | Early Grade Reading Assessment |
| ERR | Early Reading Research |
| FAL | First Additional Language |
| FFL | Foundation for Learning |
| FGDs | Focus Group Discussions |
| HL | Home Language |
| HOD | Head of Department |
| IRA | International Reading Association |
| IQ | Intellectual Quotient |
| LiEP | Language in Education Policy |
| LoLT | Language of Learning and Teaching |
| LDOE | Limpopo Department of Education |

| | |
|---------|---|
| MKO | More Knowledgeable Other |
| NDoE | National Department of Education |
| NECT | National Education Curriculum Trust |
| NEEDU | National Education and Evaluation Development Unit |
| NEPA | National Education Policy Act |
| NICHHD | National Institute of Child Health and Human Development |
| P1 | Participant 1 |
| P2 | Participant 2 |
| P3 | Participant 3 |
| P4 | Participant 4 |
| P5 | Participant 5 |
| P6 | Participant 6 |
| PIRLS | Progress in International Reading Literacy Study |
| RSA | Republic of South Africa |
| RSTGETB | Reading Strategy for the General Education and Training Band |
| SACMEQ | South Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality |
| SAL | Second Additional Language |
| UFS | University of the Free State |
| UKZN | University of KwaZulu-Natal University |
| UNISA | University of South Africa |
| USA | United States of America |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WITS | University of the Witwatersrand |
| ZPD | Zone of Proximal Development |

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explores the challenges that teachers experience when teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classes. It focuses specifically on how teachers teach reading in Sepedi, the challenges they experience, and how they respond to them. The researcher's experience as a Grade 2 teacher, has led the researcher to discover that Grade 2 learners encounter many reading problems. The reading of different books, articles, and journals also captivated my interest to dissect the challenges teachers' experience in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase.

Inglis, Thomson and Macdonald (cited in Joubert et al., 2013) state that through reading, one can acquire much information, ideas, and story-telling skills. Bacon (cited in Burns, 2006) contends that basic reading proficiency can be a complicated process that can be achieved after a certain period of time. However, the higher-order reading skills such as analysis and synthesis, take more years to develop.

Joubert *et al.* (2013:11) maintain is that "reading without understanding, however, has no value. To attribute meaning, the reader must form a picture in his mind of the concept". Smith and Read (cited in Joubert *et al.* 2013) add that reading is a process where the reader uses information from the text and links it to his/her previous knowledge and experiences in order to construct meaning.

Furthermore, Hugo (2010:135) states that "teaching reading usually revolves around two issues, namely the decoding of the text and comprehending when reading". In decoding, learners use their abilities for interpreting the written signs and symbols to turn them into meaningful language. In teaching reading, the National Department of Education advocated certain reading strategies for improving literacy levels. These strategies align with that of Spaul and Msila (cited in Naidoo *et al.* 2014) who believe that by skilfully and appropriately teaching reading to learners, a sound foundation for academic and social development is laid.

Reading can be understood as a process that enables learners to construct meaning from what is written in texts. If learners are not able to display basic reading skills, then problems

arise in communication and academic performance. This is in line with Smith and Read (cited in Joubert *et al.*, 2013) who believe that learners will not be able to read effectively if they cannot attach meaning to a word or concept.

Also, Rose (cited in Naidoo, Reddy & Dorasamy, 2014:157-158) argues that “since reading is seen as the primary mode of learning in formal education, it should be the core focus of teaching”. That is why the National Reading Strategy [NRS] (DBE, 2008) is one of the mechanisms implemented to improve the reading of young learners in South Africa. In 2008, the Foundation for Learning (FFL) was one of the bodies established by the Department of Education (DoE) to improve literacy and numeracy for learners in grades one to six in South Africa (SA).

Naidoo *et al.* (2014) indicated that according to the guidelines of Foundation for Learning (FFL), the teacher is expected to choose relevant reading passages or texts that suit the reading level and experiences of the learners in order to enhance meaning-making to improve reading skills. The FFL has outlined the strategies which teachers and learners need to promote reading proficiency. Firstly, guided reading, where learners of the same level of reading are grouped in fives and guided by the teacher while they read; secondly, reading aloud, where the teacher reads stories aloud to the whole class or group of learners; and thirdly, shared reading, where the teacher uses a “big book” to read with the whole class (Naidoo *et al.*, 2014).

These guidelines (above) are supported by the research conducted by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) that found that learners in South Africa have reading problems in whatever language they use when reading. Moreover, in reading assessments, South Africa came out last of 40 participating countries (Pretorius & Lephala, 2011). Pretorius and Lephala (2011) add that PIRLS (2006) revealed that South African learners find it difficult to attach meaning to text when reading.

Pretorius and Klapwijk’s (2016:4) study concerning literacy teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase, pointed to three aspects that challenge many teachers in South Africa: “content knowledge, pedagogic knowledge, and curriculum knowledge”.

Pedagogic knowledge means the techniques of teaching reading, writing, and language effectively. Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) recommend that for teachers to be meaningful readers, they need to understand the art of reading, be skilled readers themselves, be *au*

fait with different teaching strategies, and distinguish between different categories or genres of texts.

Klapwijk (2015) claims that for acquiring the skill to read, one has develop a significant drive in life; he adds that one begins to read as soon as one wakes up in the morning by reading different messages on phones, labels on food containers, children's diaries, newspapers, emails, and symbols on the streets and billboards.

In contrast, Pestalozzi (cited in Morrow, 2014) believes that children can teach themselves to read. While this may be true in some cases, research has not convincingly advanced theories and strategies that confirm the self-teaching of reading skills that leads to reading proficiency. In South Africa, children are struggling with reading problems, especially in the Foundation Phase classes.

Murriss (cited in Murriss, 2014:1) testifies that The State of Literacy Teaching and Learning in the Foundation Phase recommends that "reading should be taught in such a way that the learners engage meaningfully with texts and develop inferential and interpretative reasoning". In support, Clay (cited in Morrow, 2014:7) emphasises that "it is important and necessary for teachers and parents to create conditions in which the reading process grows".

The DBE (2008) categorises five components of reading: phonemic awareness, word recognition, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. These components were recommended for implementation in the everyday context of the teaching of reading.

Phonemic awareness means the ability to notice and hear the sound of spoken words. Word recognition means having skills to read unknown words. Comprehension means understanding and interpreting texts, while vocabulary acquisition means imbibing knowledge, skills, and understanding of a wide range of words. Fluency involves the ability to read the text smoothly, accurately, and with understanding.

These five components are referred to by Verbeek (cited in Murriss, 2014:1), who argues that "the choice and chronology of the so-called 'big five' in early literacy (i.e. instruction-phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) is deeply problematic. Garza (2006), and Gerber and Browne (1997) cited by Jennings *et al.*, 2010:4) believe that "children must learn to read so that they can read later... to learn". The researcher support this notion of the great necessity for learners to read proficiently so that they can learn independently, and grow into adulthood using literacy as an essential tool to

be successful in life - this implies that English as a global language of communication and economics, is indispensable.

It is also evident that the learner who experiences reading problems in the Foundation Phase will also find it difficult to read accurately in the Intermediate Phase. Hence, reading challenges need to be addressed urgently to prevent South Africa becoming a semi-literate or illiterate society. The researcher's experience as a teacher in developing learners' reading skills, coupled with the knowledge she acquired through literature study on teaching and reading, and the gross illiteracy that pervades SA society, motivated the researcher to embark on this study.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM, AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Most teachers have very little or no previous training on how to teach reading. The researcher was in the same position until she decided to further her studies. In order to circumvent this deficit, the DoE presented workshops for the teachers to attend. The workshops were conducted for two days. They are presently attending more reading workshops but leave the workshop without really understanding what is expected of them. There is no follow-up, evaluation and monitoring to check if teachers are effectively implementing what they were taught at reading workshops.

The researcher's experience as a teacher and as a pre-service Foundation Phase trainee-teacher at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) and the University of South Africa (UNISA), led to the discovery that teachers are still teaching reading in the manner that they were traditionally taught as young children. This implied that teachers are not equipped with the practical and modern methods of teaching reading. Their classrooms are also not print-rich which the researcher observed in her school. The Molteno Project monitors visited our school, but they all agreed that the visitors should be sent to my class as other classrooms were not print-rich. Gordon and Browne (2014:389) indicate that "by creating an environment that provides rich opportunities, to use the printed word, teachers help motivate children towards reading."

When teaching learners to read, teachers need to equip them with skills in attaching meaning to individual words to eventually comprehend full written texts that helps in daily life functions (Gordon & Browne, 2014). The researcher's motivation for undertaking the study is also

exhibited by merging the statement of the problem and the rationale for this study. This stemmed from the fact that Grade 2 learners could not recognise words and thus could not read sentences. This was exacerbated by the observation that most of our teachers are not familiar with current methods of teaching reading suitable for all levels of learners in Foundation Phase classrooms. Spaul (cited in Naidoo *et al.*, 2014), in his exposition of the challenges of reading among learners, motivated the researcher to explore teachers' reading strategies in Foundation Phase classes.

Naidoo *et al.* (2014:157) recommend that "learners had to be taught a variety of learning techniques to facilitate appropriate reading levels with comprehension: to extract information and to read for pleasure." In her class, the researcher did not experience such, with my grade two learners. It shows that in their grade one class, they missed the different reading techniques according to their level of development, as indicated by Naidoo *et al.* (2014).

The National Education Ministry, headed by Minister Angie Motshekga, decided to use the Annual National Analysis [ANA] (DoE, 2014) instrument to determine South African learners' reading levels. Disappointingly, ANA revealed that Grade 1 to 6 learners were performing below their grade level. Further, ANA revealed that 61% of Grade 3 learners cannot read at their appropriate age level (Naidoo *et al.*, 2014). The lowest average scores elicited from such research results revealed that Grade 2 learners could barely read.

Through such research studies (Jennings *et al.*, 2010:3-4), the researcher learned that the "reading problem is a national dilemma". What is alarming at present, according to Jennings *et al.* (2010), is that if the present generation of children do not know how to read, they will not succeed in the whirlpool of life. By using the five components of reading in the teaching of reading, teachers will reduce or eliminate reading difficulties. The researcher feel that it is essential to address issues that relate to reading challenges. Hence, this study intervention strategies to reduce reading challenges in the Foundation Phase.

1.3 PRIMARY QUESTION

The main research question for the study is:

What are teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classes?

To be able to answer the main research question, several secondary questions arose:

1. How do teachers conceptualise reading?

2. How do teachers teach reading?
3. What are the challenges that teachers experience when teaching reading?
4. How do teachers respond to these challenges?

1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The table below captures how the study will unfold.

Table 1.4: The outline of how the study unfolded

| Research questions and sub-questions. | Objectives | Methods | Chapters |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| What are teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classes? | To determine the teachers experiences when teaching reading in Foundation Phase classrooms. | Dissecting relevant literature | 2. Literature review. |
| 1. How do teachers conceptualise reading? | 1. To explore ways that teachers use to teach reading. | In-depth interviews. | 4. Findings of the empirical investigation |
| 2. How do teachers teach reading? | 2. To identify the different methods teachers use when teaching reading. | Observations | 4. Findings of the empirical investigation. |
| 3. What are the challenges that teachers experience when teaching reading? | 3. To identify the challenges that teachers experience in teaching reading | In-depth interviews Observations | 4 & 5. Findings of the empirical investigation |

| | | | |
|---|---|----------------------|---|
| 4. How do teachers respond to those challenges? | 4. To determine teachers' responses to the challenges they encounter when teaching reading. | In-depth interviews. | 6. Summary of findings and conclusions. |
|---|---|----------------------|---|

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts the social constructivism theory to explore teachers' experiences of teaching reading. "Vygotsky, the founding father of social constructivism, believed in social interaction and that it was an integral part of learning. Social constructivism is based on social interactions a student in the classroom, along with a personal critical thinking process" (Powell & Kalina, 2009:243). Jones and Areje (2002:5) confirm that:

From the very first days of the child's development, his/her activities acquire a meaning of their own in a system of social behaviour and, being directed towards a defined purpose, are frequently refracted through the prism of the child's environment. The path from object-to-child and from child-to- object passes through another person.

This theory of constructivism indicates that a teacher creates a conducive environment for learning where the learners are involved in activities that are interesting, authentic, encouraging, and full of mediation. This type of a teacher does not become a spectator but a guide for the learners when they encounter problems. The learners will be encouraged to learn by constructing meaning to their activities by comparing them to real-life experiences. Accordingly, when teaching reading, cognisance of the advantages of constructivism, is imperative.

Shraw and Norby (cited in Woolfolk, 2014: 321) indicate that constructivist theories have two main agreed-upon notions; namely, "learners are active in constructing their knowledge" and that "social interaction is important in the knowledge-construction process". In adopting this theory of learning in my study, it would assist in drawing conclusions verifying that its recommendations and processes when applied to reading lessons in the Foundation Phase, can be of benefit (or not). In this study, the researcher wants to explore how Foundation Phase teachers can accept and apply this theory in their classes during reading lessons.

The researcher wants to investigate if the challenges they encounter when teaching reading are related (or not) to the social constructivism theory.

1.5.1 Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Vygotsky's social constructivism concepts include the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding. As teachers of reading, they need to mediate and guide our learners in reading until they can read meaningfully and independently. Rogoff (cited in Wozniak, Mawr & Fisher, 1993: 126) agrees with Vygotsky (1978), who believes that it is significant for learners to be accessible for interaction with other members of the society who are more conversant and have high intellectual skills and tools, for problem-solving in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) will give guidance, where the child is not quite able to manage the problem independently.

In support of Rogoff (1993), Hall, Murphy and Soler (2008:86) argue that "the participatory appropriation view of how the development of learning occurs involves a perspective in which children and their social partners are interdependent, their roles are active and dynamically changing, and the specific process by which they communicate and share in sense-making, are suitable to cognitive development". In other words, through the teacher's guidance and interactive assistance in teaching reading, the learner will eventually be able to read independently. In this study, the Grade 2 learners were observed to have very limited proficiency in reading, and this challenge influenced researcher exploration of teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. One of the strategies (which this study examines) that teachers employed was the principle of ZPD as a means of mediation.

1.5.2 Scaffolding

Scaffolding is defined as "the individual employing assistance, can move through a series of steps that eventually lead to self-regulation and intellectual growth" (Jones & Araje, 2002:6). "Through Scaffolding, the teacher starts with the knowledge and strategies for a learner. Then when the learner starts to master the knowledge and have understanding, she or he internalizes it. The educator then withdraws the amount of assistance to the learner" (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2008:87).

In support, Gordon and Browne (2014:109) maintain that "scaffolding is a helpful structure, created to support the child in learning" and that "scaffolding assists in a task so that students learn to do the task independently, while structuring merely allows them to do the task".

Golding and Wass (2014:672) contend that “scaffolding allows students to identify and solve the educative problems, while structuring removes these problems from the student”.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

My research methodology is qualitative situated within an interpretivism paradigm. Creswell (2013) states that qualitative research begins with the assumption, a worldview, the possible use of the theoretical lens, and the study of research problems, inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To examine this problem, researchers use a qualitative approach where the collection of data is in a natural setting sensitive to people and places under study, while the data analysis is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the participants' voices, the reflectivity of the researcher, and an elaborate description and interpretation of the problem.

Qualitative research, according to Leedy and Ormrod (cited in De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2014:64) "is used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena [and] to describe and understand the phenomena from participants' points of view". A qualitative approach is suitable for the researcher's study as she intended to understand teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. As such, the researcher wants to understand how do teachers conceptualise reading? How do teachers teach reading? What are the challenges that teachers experience when teaching reading? How do teachers respond to these challenges?

1.6.1 Research Paradigm

Macmillan and Schumacher (2014:14) state that “Interpretative/constructivist researchers use systematic procedures but maintain that there are multiple socially constructed realities. There is less emphasis on numbers and more emphasis on values and context”. In addition, Allan (2010:24) indicates that; “the interpretive is subjective, and it uses a qualitative method to explore individual experiences and perspectives”. In interpretivism, “knowledge arises from the understanding of symbols and meaning (symbolic interactionism)” (De Vos *et al.*, 2014:311). In other words, teachers construct meaning of what they know about reading in the Foundation Phase, and this influences how they teach reading, and how they respond to challenges in the teaching of reading.

1.6.2 Research Design

This study adopted the case study approach to understand teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. Allan (2010:26) emphasises that "case studies provide an opportunity to explore the complexities and subtleties of a particular situation in-depth. They are located in the real world, and the research findings may be used to change practice either in the specific case used in the research or a related situation". Merriam (2015:139) posits a qualitative case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a programme, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit."

The researcher chose the case study design in order to get an in-depth understanding of the Foundation Phase teachers' experiences of teaching reading. Teachers in schools are in a real-life situation teaching reading in the Foundation Phase where they are experiencing challenges, thus they will be able to give rich information.

1.6.3 Sampling

The researcher used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2014:5) is "a type of sampling that allows for choosing small groups or individuals who are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon under study; selecting cases without needing or desiring to generalise to all such cases". Teachers-participants, according to Allan (2010:87), are "the research community." In generating data, the researcher will use semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.

The sample comprised six teachers from three different schools: two teachers are "experts" in the Foundation Phase, two teachers who never attended in-service training, and two teachers who teach in the former model C schools. The researcher chose the sample because she wanted to investigate the experiences these teachers encountered in their different contexts when teaching reading.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODS

The method the researcher used is qualitative research as it uses a theoretical lens to study research problems that dissect the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, cited in McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In such a research inquiry, one has to involve teachers who are teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. For an in-depth and rich understanding of these reading difficulties, the researcher will read

relevant primary sources, conduct interviews, record observations and consult different academic articles in journals and books.

1.7.1 Interviews

DePoy and Gilson (cited in De Vos *et al.*, 2014: 342) claim that “interviewing is the predominant mode of data or information collection in qualitative research. Researchers obtain information through direct interchange with an individual or a group that is known or expected to possess the knowledge they seek”. The researcher will conduct a verbal face-to-face interview with each teacher-participant from three different schools who teach in the Foundation Phase. Additionally, McMillan and Schumacher (2014:6) believe that the semi-structured interviews have “fairly specific interview questions that allow for individual, open-ended responses”. This is suitable for this study because the researcher will interview teachers who have different experiences in teaching reading in their different schools and classrooms and this will help the researcher to establish their real-life and challenging experiences, which will help the researcher in answering questions like, *how do teachers conceptualise reading?*

The researcher will ask permission to go into the classroom where each participant will be teaching reading. Through observation, the researcher will be able to learn more about the effects of challenges that teachers encounter, and how teachers respond to them when teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. The teachers’ responses will help provide invaluable data on teachers’ authentic experiences when teaching reading by using this case study approach.

The researcher will conduct the interviews at three different schools, not at one school. It will be a semi-structured one-on-one interview. De Vos *et al.* (2014:351) adds that “in general, researchers use semi-structured interviews to gain a detailed picture of a participant’s beliefs about ... a particular topic”. In each interview, the researcher will use the same set of questions. The researcher can add other questions if the necessity for probing arises. The researcher will also use an audio-recorder and video-recorder, to record data to transcribe later after completing the interviews and observations. The researcher will compare the information from her analysis of data to the reviewed literature and thereafter present the findings and conclusions.

1.8 LITERATURE STUDY

For this study, the researcher will consult different documents, policies, and texts to determine what various authors are saying about the reading challenges that the teachers experience when teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. The researcher will look for gaps concerning her research topic and then use them to connect to new ideas. The researcher will then compare the findings from the text, interviews, and observations to determine the differences and similarities concerning the study's topic.

1.9 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

The researcher has organised her research into six chapters:

Chapter 1: In this chapter, the researcher provides an introduction and orientation of the study. It outlines the problem statement, rationale and objectives of the study, primary and secondary questions, research methods, and theoretical or conceptual framework.

Chapter 2: This chapter focuses on the different views from different literature sources that deal with reading as a challenge in the Foundation Phase.

Chapter 3: The chapter describes the research methodology, design, and procedures. It also provides an idea of how I generate data.

Chapter 4: The chapter discusses how data is collected using the research instruments such as interviews, observations, and literature documents.

Chapter 5: This chapter presents the data analysis of classroom observations.

Chapter 6: This final chapter outlines the conclusions of the research.

1.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter illustrated the overview of this research study. The rationale for conducting the study, research questions, research aims and objectives, theoretical framework, research methodology, research methods, literature study, and the layout of the chapters, have been discussed. The following chapter (two) discusses the literature on teaching reading.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter (1) discussed the overview of the study. This chapter focuses on the literature study related to teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classes. A discussion on the theoretical framework is necessary as a guide towards understanding the teaching of reading. A discussion on the importance of reading in the Foundation Phase and the relevant reading approaches and strategies used in teaching reading in Grade 2 classrooms will be included. Further, the five components of teaching reading will receive attention in this chapter. The other aspects related to teaching reading, such as the stages of reading and word attack skills, will also be focused on.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Sinclair (2007), a theoretical framework like a map or travel plan. When planning a journey in an unfamiliar country, people seek as much knowledge as possible about the best way to travel, using previous experience and accounts of others who have been on similar trips. The plan will ensure that the journey is successful.

In this study, the Social Constructivism Theory, as my theoretical framework, will map a better understanding of the knowledge about teaching reading. According to Powel and Kalina (2009), Social Constructivism is one primary method of teaching that benefits the learners since it incorporates interaction and collaboration. Vygotsky is regarded as the father of Social Constructivism (1978). Social Constructivism is based on his principles of cognitive development. In this theory, three components are identified; namely, the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), Scaffolding, and Zone of Proximal Development [ZPD] (Donald *et al.*, 2008). In this study, the teachers have more knowledge than the learners, which they use in providing clues to the learners when they teach reading.

The second component, which is scaffolding, implies a process of mediating the appropriate structures and strategies of a particular knowledge area (Donald *et al.*, 2008). In this case,

the particular knowledge area is teaching reading. In teaching reading, teachers start with the knowledge structures and strategies that learners need to acquire and master. Some of the knowledge structures and strategies necessary for teaching reading and learning how to read, are: reading methods, five components of teaching reading, reading stages, and reading processes. The third component of the Social Constructivism Theory, namely ZPD, is described by Donald *et al.* (2008:59) as follows:

That critical space where a child cannot quite understand something on his/her own, but has the potential to do so through proximal interaction with another person. A parent, peer, teacher, or another mentor who helps him/her think forward into that space (i.e. to make connections between the familiar and unfamiliar) acts as a mediator.

Based on the above explanation by Donald *et al.* (2008), it is significant that teachers proximally interact with the learners in order for them to understand a specific concept by constructing their meanings. When the learners start to master the knowledge, skills, understand and internalise it, the teacher withdraws the amount of assistance given to the learners. Social Constructivism enhances interconnectedness amongst the three components and consequently improves the teaching and learning of reading in Foundation Phase classrooms.

Vygotsky's constructivist theory (1978) promotes an interactive process of learning, which implies that learners construct knowledge in active engagement with the More Knowledgeable Other [MKO] (Van Staden, 2018). When the teachers, as MKOs, use the different reading methodologies like shared reading, guided reading, paired reading, and reading aloud, they need to model reading effectively to the learners to read independently. Hill (cited in Moosa, 2018) indicates that demonstrations would enable learners to acquire the necessary reading skills by allowing them to talk about the picture, sounding, reading after the teacher, reading independently, and listening to the teachers when they read aloud. As the MKO, the teacher must interact meaningfully with the learners to facilitate the acquisition of necessary reading skills for the development of their critical thinking. Through these reading methodologies, the teachers will be scaffolding learners to understand as they will ask learners questions that will assist them in establishing the learners' understanding and level of development. The discussion below is about the importance of reading.

2.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF READING

Since this study is about the teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase, I think it is just as important to understand the significance of reading to the learners. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) maintain that reading for learners helps them obtain meaning from print and familiarises them with frequent, regular spelling-sound relationships. When the learners obtain meaning from the text, their word recognition, accuracy, and fluency skills will also improve (Snow *et al.*, 1998). In support, Davis (2016) asserts that reading develops the learners' thinking. Davis (2016:3) adds that the "mind is a muscle," and as a muscle, it needs exercise. Reading as a means of exercising the mind, helps learners to understand the written text. Davis (2016) further states that when teachers read to the learners, they help to develop their necessary language skills. When a learner can read, it is easy to interpret what he/she is reading and relate it to his/her real situation in his/her life world (Gordon & Browne, 2014). Besides, learners' ability to read can help them to acquire knowledge, self-actualise, and enhance their self-esteem. The significance of reading relates well with the social constructivist component of MKO, which insists that teachers as MKOs can help learners effectively develop their reading skills.

The importance of reading to learners extends far beyond the mere acquisition of vocabulary. Ramabenyane (2012) states that reading to learners also assists them to demonstrate their ability to comprehend, interpret and respond to a text, based on the learner's prior knowledge. Reading different texts to learners stimulates their creativity and imagination (Short, 2017). In support, Bonfiglio (2017) emphasises that when learners identify the characters, they can relate to the real story and develop an emotional attachment with the characters. Identifying characters becomes evident when the learners can role-play and dramatise the read stories.

2.4 WHAT IS READING?

Ramabenyane (2012:29) provides a detailed description of the term reading, as having "different but related meanings in the education context", which can refer to a "skill or a process". She adds that as one of the four necessary language skills, reading enhances the ability to turn the collection of written symbols (letters) into spoken language; however, this is a complex process of constructing meaning from the written text. Similarly, reading is

explained as “a process in which information from the text and the reader’s background act together to provide meaning” (Read, cited in Joubert, Bester, Meyer & Evans, 2013:102). Unfortunately, learners who cannot read do not often succeed academically. For this reason, the DBE (2008) provided a well-planned reading programme aimed at developing learners to become skillful readers. The planned reading programmes indicate the importance of enriching and equipping the Foundation Phase learners with reading skills and strategies to use in becoming fluent readers.

2.5 TEACHING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

Following from the description of reading in the section above, we see reading as a complex process. Congruently, the teaching of reading is just as complex. Pretorius *et al.* (2016) indicate that most South African teachers in the Foundation Phase (Grade 1- 3) experience challenges in teaching reading. This emanates from different studies such as SACMEQ (2001) and PIRLS (2006; 2011; 2016), which indicate that South African learners in the Foundation Phase perform poorly in reading in comparison to their contemporaries in other countries. The Annual National Assessments (ANA), which were conducted in South Africa in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases to assess learners’ ability in literacy and mathematics (DoE, 2015), revealed learners’ poor performance in reading.

Several reasons for poor reading performance of learners in South African primary schools include factors relating to socio-economic background, parents’ illiteracy, poor leadership and management in schools, lack of resources in schools, and poorly qualified teachers (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). It is in line with Ramabenyane’s (2012) in-depth situation analysis, which investigated the problems Foundation Phase teachers experience when teaching reading. What further exacerbated the situation was the role of Home language (HL) and the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) when teaching reading.

2.5.1 Teaching reading within the South African curriculum

The South African curriculum, known as Curriculum 2005, was implemented in 1998 to redress the past injustices of apartheid education before 1994. After many years of review, transformation, and improvements to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was implemented in 2012. The

principles of CAPS (2011) entail, among others, social transformation, immense knowledge and high skills, progression, human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice, valuing indigenous knowledge systems, credibility, quality, and efficiency. The CAPS (2011) as a vehicle for teaching and learning also stipulates the provision of languages in all phases in terms of Home language (HL) First Additional Language (FAL) and Second Additional Language (SAL). The CAPS (2011) documents on HL, FAL, and SAL provide guidelines on how much time should be spent on each topic and what content should be covered. They also provide the content concepts and skills that need to be developed in each term.

The other provisions are formal and assessment activities, including suggestions for informal assessment and the recommended resources per grade (CAPS, 2011). Most importantly, CAPS (2011) outlines the role of HL in the Foundation Phase. In this study, the focus is on teaching and learning Sepedi HL. The CAPS policy documents on languages also highlight different skills for HL (Sepedi). The prescribed skills for Foundation Phase are listening and speaking, reading and phonics, writing and handwriting, thinking and reasoning, and language use and structure (Survival Guide, DoE, 2011).

2.5.2 Teaching Reading from other Countries' Perspectives

South Africa is not the only country in which learners do not perform well in reading. Some countries with similar problems as South Africa concerning learners' poor performance in reading, recommend some guidelines on how to teach reading. For instance, according to Moats (cited in Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016), the USA Education Ministry believes that in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classrooms, teachers must have enough content knowledge concerning reading, in addition to a high level of pedagogical knowledge.

Twist *et al.* (cited in Naidoo *et al.*, 2014) indicates that in Netherlands and England it is crucial to make use of teachers who are already on retirement as volunteers. These teachers receive continuous support from the Government. In the United States, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's (NICHD) report on how to conduct teaching reading suggests that it is best when using the "systematic phonics instruction" especially for beginners to avoid reading difficulties. In 2009, during teaching practices in one of Gauteng schools, retired teachers were assisting learners experiencing reading challenges during school hours. They were allocated classes which they used to assist such learners.

In Australia, it is recommended that in teaching reading, teachers should ensure that learners master the alphabets through phonics, phonemic awareness, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies in teaching of reading (Jolliffe *et al.*, 2015). The Botswana Government recommends that teachers be acquainted with decoding strategies, enhancing comprehension instructions, and being life-long learners to teach reading in the Foundation Phase classrooms (Mokotedi, 2012).

China is another country where learners perform poorly in reading. Some of the reasons put forth by Zhu and Zhang (cited in Nel, 2016:103) are:

Cognition and the assumption that the child will automatically acquire knowledge through reading – the emphasis is on learning Chinese characters. There are limited quality reading materials, of which many are outdated, easy, and boring, inappropriate teaching methods. For example, there is an emphasis on memorisation, focusing on literacy teaching without also reading, [and] poor reading environments which are rigid and too serious.

Zhu and Zhang (cited in Nel, 2016:103) recommend that the teachers teaching reading in Chinese early childhood education should use strategies on how to create a meaningful learning and teaching environment, and they should also consider making the curriculum to be practical more than theoretical.

In the USA, it is recommended that teachers who teach reading in the Foundation Phase should use small group instruction, scaffolding, and an emphasis on real reading when teaching phonics. In a study of 14 USA schools, reading problems emanate from the high rate of learners living in poverty (Taylor *et al.* cited in Jolliffe *et al.*, 2015). Jolliffe *et al.* (2015) further indicated the poor interrelation between the school and the parents, which exposed reading being without “home-school” assistance. In the USA, the leading cause of reading inefficiency is because of dire socio-economic issues. The USA Government believes that the two-way parent-school relationship plays a significant role in developing learners to be independent readers.

2.6 METHODS FOR TEACHING READING

The CAPS (2011) documents on languages made provision and set the time suitable for teaching reading using different methods; namely, Guided Reading, Shared Reading, Independent Reading, Reading Aloud, and Paired Reading.

2.6.1 Guided Reading

Guided Reading is a reading activity where learners are involved in a constructive discussion about what they are reading with the teacher and peers and answering questions from the text. Through Guided Reading, the teachers are in a position to involve the learners in the reading activities (Horton, 2016). In guided reading, the teacher encourages learners to follow the prescribed reading processes. During reading, the teacher allows learners to read the title of the book, content pages, sub-headings, blurbs, pictures, and make predictions about the story (Pre-reading). The learners develop the ability to read, decode, and blending the story. Reading involves further checking of the meaning of difficult or new words (during reading). The teacher must equip learners with skills to link the text information with their own real-life experiences and opinions. The teacher must further develop learners' memory for new words and their meanings in different contexts [after reading] (DBE, 2008).

Pretorius and Lephalala (2011:10) assert that guided reading aims to develop learners' reading abilities through group support with learners of their same abilities. They add that when teaching learners to read, teachers become aware that many of them may be having fun in "taking a tour through the story" via "thematic reading," and there are those who are actively participating but do not understand the story. The reason might be that the information may be too complicated for their level of development, and hence they seem not to be coping. When reading, it is therefore imperative to use Guided Reading strategies so that it is in sync with the cognitive level of the learners.

Additionally, Ramabenyane (2012) maintains that reading to the learners assists learners in demonstrating their ability to comprehend, interpret, and respond to text based on prior knowledge. Grade 1 teachers, when reading to the learners, demonstrate how to read using reading methodologies such as Guided Reading and Shared Reading. The teacher needs to guide and equip learners to develop reading skills, which will help learners to read proficiently in a print-rich environment that helps learners to identify with the new information. However, Ramabenyane and Khabanyane (2013) indicate that Grade 1 teachers who do not

have much insight into developing learners' reading skills to play a role in guiding learners, will not be able to create an environment conducive to learning reading.

2.6.2 Shared Reading

Shared Reading is another method of teaching reading where teachers use a big book because the whole class has to read from one book, which they are all able to see. The book has large font enough to be visible to the whole group. The teacher uses a pointer to point to words as they read; and the teacher reads while the learners listen (Joubert *et al.*, 2013). Through shared reading, the learners need to understand what the text is all about and predict what will happen on the next page. The teacher needs to explain the keywords, characters, and punctuations; in addition to asking learners questions, allowing them to relate the text to their experiences, and encouraging them to sequence and re-tell the story (DBE, 2004).

Also, in Shared Reading, the teacher reads aloud, and the learners read after the teacher. The teacher demonstrates the art of reading. The story is re-read several times until the learners are well acquainted with it. Through this repetition, the learners develop the necessary vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation knowledge. The purpose of the Shared Reading technique is to help teachers to achieve higher assessment standards for the particular grade (DBE, 2004). Assessment standards are the requirements for learner-achievement in a specific grade. The source, *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades* (DBE, 2008:20), states that shared reading can teach other aspects like “phonics, alliterations, rhythm and rhymes”. The teachers can make shared reading enjoyable by encouraging the learners to clap hands, sing, and dance.

2.6.3 Independent Reading

The DBE (2008:27) states that; “Independent reading is a purposeful, planned activity” where the teacher encourages the emergent readers to practise reading independently which is followed by “discussion and dialogue”. Importantly, the teacher should be listening and observing the learners to see how they behave during Independent Reading time (DBE, 2008). Burns (2006) indicates that Independent Reading allows learners to make their choices when working on their own without interacting with peers when reading.

During Independent reading sessions the teachers must encourage learners to read books that are simple and interesting to enhance their interest. In addition, Joubert *et al.* (2013) state that in Independent Reading, the learners read unassisted every day. The learners read independently after finishing given tasks, while other learners are still busy. It is done daily at the prescribed time. During Independent Reading, the learners read stories (they have already read as a class) alone silently for fifteen minutes. The teacher should plan the reading time at the same time every day, know what learners are to read that day, and have rules of behaviour during Independent Reading (DBE, 2008:28).

2.6.4 Reading Aloud

Reading Aloud is when the teacher, adults or parents read aloud to the learners. Through reading aloud, the learners can hear how the teacher sounds out letters and words, and spelling becomes easy (Davis, 2016). Reading Aloud means an adult or teacher is modelling or demonstrating to the learners how to pronounce and sound the words in the text. The teacher can decide to read aloud during the day, end of day, or in the morning as there is no prescribed time. If the teacher uses picture storybooks for reading aloud, he/she should allow the learners to talk about the title, cover page, blurb, and authors. The learners should be allowed to think, predict, and be involved in the discussions. They need to imbibe the meaning of the text and relate it to their everyday lives (Joubert *et al.*, 2013).

Reading Aloud is a whole-class activity, which aims to develop a love for reading, while stimulating the development of vocabulary. In reading aloud, different texts can be used: stories, poems, non-fiction books, newspapers, or magazines (DBE 2008). In choosing a text for Reading Aloud, the teacher should know the learners' interests and development level. The teacher should have read the story and know it in detail. The teacher should use dramatisation, and different voices and actions to portray the characters and situations (Joubert *et al.*, 2013)

2.6.5 Paired Reading

Gunning (cited in Joubert *et al.*, 2013) regards Paired Reading as reading together where two learners read together the same book. The teacher, as a facilitator, should be present as the pair reads. This particular book should be of interest to both learners. They can read different texts like poems, rhymes and riddles. Here, the teacher can use two learners of different levels of development. The one who can read will help the other learner who

struggles to read. Paired Reading develops learners' interest in reading, and it encourages peer assistance.

In order to improve reading in the Foundation Phase, it is essential for teachers to incorporate this reading method such that learners are able to acquire reading skills and apply them effectively in their independent reading, in groups and in pairs.

2.7 TEACHING READING

The importance of lesson planning and preparation is a prerequisite for successful teaching (Taskin 2017; Vdovina & Gaibisso 2013). A sound lesson-plan comprises of three parts: the first part is the introduction, which is also called the pre-interactive phase; the second is the lesson body, also called the interactive phase, where the actual teaching, activities, and assessment take place; and the third part refers to the summary, application, closure phase - also called the post-interactive phase. The lesson-plan allows the teacher time to decide on the content to be taught, teaching strategies, methods, and techniques they will use, and how they will use them in presenting the lesson. When teachers plan their lessons, they must also decide on the learning materials they will use. These learning materials are specifically significant in the Foundation Phase classes (Ramabenyane, 2012). This study expected the teachers to plan the lessons that they will present well in advance (see 5.2).

There are five components of teaching reading stipulated in the CAPS (2011) document to develop good readers in South Africa: phonemic awareness, word recognition, phonics, vocabulary development, comprehension, and fluency. These components serve as a framework of how teaching reading should unfold in the classrooms. Discussions in this section will be about these five components of teaching reading.

2.7.1 Word Recognition

The DBE (2008) indicated that word recognition is a skill that teachers need to equip learners with especially where they read words that they are not familiar with; and then after being guided, start reading with understanding. It has two elements: phonics and sight words. Probert and De Vos (2016) highlight that word recognition is a real contributor to reading fluently, and it plays a significant role in the understanding of the language structure. Word

recognition can help develop learners' reading, but words are linked to phrases, clauses and sentences in a complicated way.

Hua (cited in Probert & De Vos, 2016:1) confirms that; "African languages have relatively simple syllabus structure based on a 'C' (consonant) 'V' (vowel) 'V' (vowel) template". For example, /lee/ is a Sepedi word, which means an egg. Zergani (2016) posits that it is important to build a strong foundation of learners' HL for second language learning. However, Probert and De Vos (2016) also mention constraints that are not appropriate syllable onsets. In English, word formulations are difficult; they can be CV, CCCV, or CVC words. An example of the word indicating a CCCV syllable structure is "scrub".

In the Sepedi language, such onsets do not exist. Let us use the word "door" in Sepedi, which means /lebatl/. The onset is /le-/ and the syllable structure will be CVCVCV. There is a significant difference between the syllable structure of Sepedi and English. Hence, it will not be easy for learners in the Foundation Phase to understand, as most of Sepedi words are longer than the EFAL words. In Sepedi, alphabets like c, q, v, x, and z do not exist. Hence, Probert and De Vos (2016), claim that it would be difficult for learners to transfer skills from one language to another.

2.7.2 Phonics

Phonics instruction, according to Phajane (2012), is teaching learners to read by relating written letters and sounds of the spoken language. In addition, Nel, Nel, Nel and Hugo (cited in Hlaethwa, 2013) believe that phonics is the method that will help learners to sound words at Foundation Phase level. Sounding of words equips learners with skills for letter recognition, decoding, and blending of words and syllables. It implies that the teachers who teach reading should consider the sounding of words and break them up into parts (syllables) to make it easier to pronounce the whole word. For example, the Sepedi word, *ema* (stand up), can be decoded into these phonemes /e/, /m/ and /a/.

Drummond and Style (cited in Mokotedi, 2012) indicate that teaching phonics is confusing even though education policies of teaching reading in England and the USA believe it to be an excellent method to teach reading in the Foundation Phase. In addition, Chall (cited in Mokotedi, 2012), argues that the learners who are taught through phonics learn to read faster than those who are not taught through phonics.

Similarly, Torgerson *et al.* (cited in Mokotedi, 2012) state that after studying research reviews, it was clear that teaching through phonics is of benefit to the learners. However, the problem is that it does not help the learners to understand information that is important from learning to read. Dest (cited in Mokotedi, 2012) confirms that in Australia, research indicated that in teaching reading where phonics is not used, the learner's language progress was hampered and that it negatively affected learners' reading, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

Hugo (cited in Caddy, 2015:36) states that "this approach requires learners first to recognize and read individual sounds and then approach digraphs and blends before attempting to read single words". Hugo (cited in Caddy, 2015:36) established that individual reading of sounds creates problems due to many disadvantages that appear in schools, like an illiteracy background. Blunden-Groef (cited in Caddy 2015) believes that too much concentration on the phonic method can hamper comprehension and fluency reading. Hence, there is a clear indication that teaching reading by using phonics is essential but can be detrimental if not used correctly or with understanding. The other difficult part about phonics is that the learners have to learn and understand the words that sound different to how they are spelled (Nkosi, cited in Zama, 2014).

Early grade reading assessment (EGRA) is administered through subtasks (Dubeck & Gove, 2014). Hence, EGRA requires teachers' teaching phonics as part of reading to check the letters that the learner can sound. This will help us as teachers to be able to assess the learners and know their stages of development. This is not only in phonics - it is also in vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. However, time will differ according to levels of difficulty. The EGRA board requires teachers not to teach comprehension as a memory task; they recommend that teachers' after teaching comprehension should not remove the comprehension text, and it should be opened so that the learners could be able to recall and find answers for their given task. Hence, my understanding is that the EGRA document supplements the reading strategies recommended by the DBE (2008) and CAPS (2011).

2.7.3 Sight Words

Sight words are words, that learners will automatically learn by hearing and seeing their shape and characteristics. The sight words cannot be decoded and blended (DBE, 2008) because the learners do not have the concept of such words, but within a short space of

time, they can chant them after using the repetition principle (e.g. /šeo/). Verhoeven (cited in Van Staden, 2011) indicates that it is difficult to understand the meaning and to pronounce sight words because many learners are not used to the vocabulary, thus it is difficult for teachers to employ the “sight-word” technique.

2.7.4 Developing Comprehension Skills

Reading to understand is one of the most critical components of teaching reading. This skill cuts across all reading activities done in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classrooms. It is of prime importance that comprehension is developed from the beginning; it must not be left until learners can decode or read sight words. As a teacher, who is teaching reading in the Foundation Phase, I should avoid teaching learners to “bark” at print when reading, and should instead encourage them to read with understanding by interpreting the text as they are reading (DBE, 2008). Murriss (2014:12) argues that:

Deep reading requires comprehension skills that do not develop naturally, but need to be explicitly instilled even before formal schooling starts. It is conceptually flawed to put so much emphasis on decoding skills - the solution, and the problem do not match.

In addition, Mudzielwana et al. (cited in Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016) discovered that when teachers teach comprehension, they do not give explicit instruction to the learners. It then happens that learners find it challenging to understand what teachers expect of them. Also, teachers do not understand the skills of teaching reading through comprehension - like prediction, scanning and skimming. In teaching reading to their learners, the teachers must use differentiation to be able to reach all levels of development of the learners in the classroom. They should also use different texts to suit different learners’ levels of development to ensure that the learning environment is print-rich. All these aspects are believed to be of motivation to the learners towards developing better reading skills.

Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) found that in teaching reading in schools, consideration must be based on constructing meaning and comprehension, as this will help the learners perform well. When teaching reading is not focused on meaning and comprehension, the learners’ performance becomes low. Moreover, the limited understanding of teaching reading by teachers themselves, led to low performance in schools. The teachers’ failure to guide and assist learners with the text in terms of developing their comprehension skills is another cause of concern, exacerbated by underqualified teachers who “side-step” teaching

comprehension. If teachers are still encountering such problems, then we will continue experiencing problems in the teaching of reading.

Sampson and Condy (2016:85) fear that teachers will fail to bring learners to a level at which they need to be in terms of reading fluently in their different subjects so as to comprehend information effectively, adding that “if one accepts that comprehension is the goal of reading, then vocabulary is the foundation of reading comprehension”. In congruence, Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) affirm that comprehension is the crucial tool for the construction of meaning and the very objective for reading. Research also indicates that teachers do not pay attention to the construction of meaning and comprehension, rather they focus mainly on strategies for decoding (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). Incorporating comprehension skills will develop learners to be competent readers, unlike using just one skill, which will make learners struggle to read. McNamara (cited in Pretorius & Condy, 2016:3) asserts that:

The foundation for good reading is the same for all learners. All readers, regardless of their age, gender, or ability, need to develop motivation to read, comprehend, and to be fluent. Research indicates that if teachers in their teaching of reading show clear teaching by demonstrating [a focus] on comprehension then this can assist learners in developing their comprehension skills as readers.

2.7.5 Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the bank of words that one has acquired which can be used to communicate with and function in daily activities in a meaningful manner. In teaching reading, vocabulary extension is the common set of new words that the learner acquires through interacting with text, pictures, posters, and through the teachers’ explanations. According to the DBE (2008), the acquisition of vocabulary plays an important role as it will equip the learners with an insight into many words and their meanings for daily use. If the learners know many words, they will be able to read fluently and comprehend information more easily. The DBE (2008) stipulates that in teaching reading, teachers need to provide opportunities for learners to read regularly and listen to stories that interest them. Sedita (2005:1) believes that “vocabulary knowledge is important because it encompasses all the words, we must know to access our background knowledge, express our ideas, communicate effectively, and learn about new concepts”.

By reading stories that interest learners, they will be motivated to construct meaning from what they read. Jennings *et al.* (2010) state that vocabulary could be increased by reading books, thus teachers should take into consideration the interest levels of the books they use. Phajane (2012:37), referring to the bank of words one needs to communicate effectively, states that "if one accepts that comprehension is the goal of reading, then vocabulary is the foundation of reading comprehension, and this includes knowing the meaning of words and their pronunciation". Thus, learners' acquisition of vocabulary and its meanings are vital. Phajane (2012) declares that if the learners have limited vocabulary, they will also have fewer ideas of expression.

Further, Cain, Oakhill, and Lemmon (cited in Mokotedi, 2012) argue that acquiring vocabulary does not mean at reading comprehension level only; it also means an exceptional achievement of verbal intellectual quotient (IQ). Cameron, Harmon, Keser, and Linse (cited in Alqahtani, 2015) confirms that vocabulary enhances learners' understanding of the language they use as they acquire new knowledge, but they emphasise that in teaching reading, vocabulary has more effect than other reading components, like phonics and comprehension. Berne and Blachowicz (cited in Alqahtina, 2015), maintain that the teaching of vocabulary while teaching reading is difficult, because teachers are unsure of the starting point concerning the teaching of vocabulary.

To alleviate teachers' problems in teaching reading using vocabulary, Murcia (cited in Alqahtima 2015), recommended three approaches to introduce vocabulary and for perceiving text. The first is to use events that are rich enough to give authentic evidence for perceiving text. The second approach refers to the power of memory to develop keyword-skills. The third is the notebook vocabulary approach where learning does not depend on arranging vocabulary notebooks. Correa and Cano (2016) also unearthed three approaches: using meaning when explaining words that express the same thing; expressing meaning to the learners in order to recognise the beginning and the end of the word including pronunciations; and spelling of words. Moreover, learners also need to use words to cohere with grammatical patterns.

The general notion in education circles is that vocabulary acquisition skills are essential when teaching reading. The teachers are supposed to use one or more of the suggested

approaches when teaching reading. Are all teachers underqualified and/or not trained? Malda *et al.* (cited in Naidoo *et al.*, 2014), refer to the National Teachers' Education Audit of 1995 (DoE, 2008a) which established that "many South African educators are underqualified or unqualified, and teachers' training fails to meet the required standard. If this dire situation persists, then all the suggested methods, will not work unless teachers are retrained and become lifelong learners.

2.7.6 Fluency

According to Allington and Garan, fluency is the ability to read a text correctly, smoothly, and fast with understanding. In teaching reading, the teachers need to equip learners with the skills to read fluently. In their reading, the learners are supposed to attach meaning to the words in the text. In addition, Phajane (2012), argues that since fluency is an essential component of teaching reading, it is imperative that teachers model and encourage learners to read orally and silently repeatedly with their peers, parents, teachers, and independently. Hlalethwa (2013:43) purports that "reading is described as fluent when learners phrase correctly, use correct pronunciation without any omission, repetitions, substitution, inversions or insertions, word-guessing or voicing. Maphumulo (cited in Zama, 2014) adds that fluency is essential because it helps learners understand and acquire the competency in comprehension and have an insight into what they read; and that teachers need to develop fluency themselves because if learners cannot read fluently, there will be a lack of comprehension.

My understanding is that without phonics, learners will not be able to read with comprehension. Comprehension depends on the amount of vocabulary the learners have acquired. If the learners master the phonics, then they will be able to acquire vocabulary. Their vocabulary will enhance their level of comprehension. To help learners to read fluently, the teachers need to emphasise phonics, vocabulary, word recognition, and comprehension when teaching reading. For teachers to develop fluency amongst learners, they must encourage reading aloud and reading silently with peers, parents, teachers, and with other individuals.

2.8 READING STAGES

The stages of reading development are essential for teaching reading (DBE, 2008). The reading stages is useful because they help the teacher track the progressive levels of their learners. They will know at which level of development the learner has reached and determine the skills they need for their development in reading. It also helps in assessing the performance of learners and their reading skills. The stages are: pre-reader, emergent, early, developing, fluent, and the independent reader.

2.8.1 Pre-reader

During this stage, the teacher is expected to determine which reading skills the learners have developed. It will determine the way he/she holds the book, ability to recognise the beginning and the end of the book, ability to listen to the story and interpret the pictures in the text, ability to know the letters, and show interest in print-rich surroundings (DBE, 2008).

2.8.2 The Emergent Reader

The emergent readers use pictures to tell the story, know some of the sounds and letters that form words, and can join the teacher in reading the books that they know. They can also identify their names, read print, and recognise patterns in their surroundings (DBE, 2008).

2.8.3 Early Reader

Early readers know most of the sounds and words. They can identify words, are able to tell stories that suit their age, use pictures to make meaning, and read aloud independently. They read word-by-word since they are not yet fluent readers (DBE, 2008).

2.8.4 Developing Reader

As learners are unable to read, they need to use pictures to construct meaning and develop sentences correctly. They make sounds when they learn through phonics. They use a combination of words to form phrases rather than reading word-for-word. The learner can re-tell the story logically, recognise words they know, have a vocabulary of fifty words and know their meaning, punctuate when reading, and can self-correct when making mistakes. The learner can also read large print books that are easy to read (DBE, 2008).

2.8.5 The Early Fluent Reader

The early fluent reader can use the cueing or prompting system, like phonics. This time the learner can recognise about two hundred words, can read sixty words fluently, while enhancing comprehension and punctuation skills. He/she can read books with longer sentences sometimes having complex structures. They can model the story, find solutions to problems, read silently for extended periods, use reference materials with guidance, and read books with smaller print (DBE, 2008).

2.8.6 The Independent Reader

The learner can unconsciously use phonic language and general knowledge, integrating them into his or her general approach to new text. The learner can read fluently for sixty words or more per minute, can understand the meaning of what the text implies, and can use references books independently (DBE, 2008).

2.9 WORD ATTACK SKILLS STRATEGIES

Word attack skills are linked to the “five finger” strategy of reading (DBE, 2008). The teacher should equip the learners with this skill, which they utilise when they encounter a difficult word. When this happens, they need to remember what each finger says. The thumb requires the reader to leave out the unfamiliar word and continue to read the sentence to the end. By doing this, they could gather contextual clues to “guess” or grasp the meaning of the unfamiliar word. If they still struggle to read the word after skipping it, they must then follow the first finger instruction (DBE, 2008).

The first finger requires the reader to look at the pictures and heading for clues to read and understand the unfamiliar word. If they still struggle to read the word, the learners use the second finger, which requires the reader to ask if there is a part of the word, that the learner recognises. If not, they need to use the third finger, which requires the reader to sound the word out. If the learner still finds it difficult, then he/she uses the little finger, which requires the reader to ask the teacher what the word means (DBE, 2008).

2.10 READING PROCESSES

The reading process focuses on two fundamental aspects: cognitive process, and social process. The interaction of teachers and learners through text is a social process, whereas

the cognitive process includes the reading processes before reading, during reading, and after reading. According to the DBE (2008), reading processes are familiar to those who have the reading skills. Teachers, being those implementing the reading process, are the more the MKOs as indicated by Vygotsky (1978). Hence, teachers need to equip learners with skills that will help them make sense of the text. This involves the need to predict what the text is all about, sound words, decode, and blend words. The different reading methods are incorporated in the reading process: shared reading, guided reading, and reading aloud, and incorporating the pre-read, during-read, and post-read process.

The cognitive process is about the thinking functions of readers as they read the text. The cognitive processes are bottom-up and top-down approaches. The bottom-up approach has its roots in behaviourist principles. According to Lenjani (2018:31), the Behaviourist Theory "is a learning theory that only focuses on objectively observable behaviours and discounts any independent activities of the mind."

Dechant (1991) believes that a bottom-up reading model emphasises a single-direction to part-to-whole processing of text. Bottom-up is about decoding letters into words, phrases, and sentences. The top-down approach is rooted in the Psycholinguistic Theory. As a top-down theorist, Goodman (1971) defines reading as a "psycholinguistic guessing game" and emphasises that readers benefit by making predictions from their prior knowledge to understand their reading. Nordquist (2018:31) believes that the psycholinguistic theory "is the study of mental aspects of language and speech. It is primarily concerned with how language is presented and processed in their brain". It means learners as readers create meaning by using their prior knowledge, predictions, speculations, and questions to understand text.

2.10.1 Before-reading

In the before-reading process, the teacher should use the text to be read and allow the learners to read the title page, content pages, sub-headings, titles of chapters, the back of the book, and the pictures (DBE, 2008). Asking learners questions before reading will assist the teacher in determining learners' prior-knowledge, and where the learner needs assistance (scaffolding) which will enable learners to construct their meaning through texts, as promoted by Vygotsky (1978).

2.10.2 During-reading

The during-reading process is when the teacher can ask learners' questions to see if the meaning is clear to them, and this involves the following steps:

- Lead the learners via questions to identify if they have the core idea concerning meaning;
- Allow them to read the paragraph to determine what they will do if they find the unfamiliar word; and
- Check if they will be able to use the five-finger strategy to read and grasp the meaning and pronunciation of unfamiliar words.

2.10.3 After-reading

The after-reading process is when the teacher asks the learners questions to determine if they will be able to relate the text to their real-life experiences, and to see if they still remember the meaning of the new words when seeing them in a different context.

The practical part of this lies in the reading methods; for example, shared reading. In shared reading, we follow the reading processes. The learners will be asked questions that will motivate them to talk about the cover page, do picture tours, and predict what will happen in the next page or inside the book. They will also be asked to re-tell and sequence the story.

The questions asked will address phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension. Asking learners to clap hands when they hear the word with the sound /p/, and pronounce the word, is word recognition. When this process is applied in conjunction with shared reading, learners are asked questions that will require them to use their thinking skills and relate the text to their everyday lives.

In teaching reading, there are different aspects that teachers need to focus on to equip learners with skills to read fluently and with understanding. The different aspects of reading methods are integrated and involve components of teaching reading, stages of reading, reading processes, and word-attack skills. The teacher will ask questions from the text to scaffold learners' thinking abilities and involve them actively as they engage with the text. If

the learners acquire such skills, they will be able to use the five-finger strategy when they come into contact with difficult words while reading a piece of text.

To support the integrative or interwoven aspects of reading methods, Wegenhart (2015) recommends Scarborough's (2001) breakdown of the interwoven strands into single threads for simple reading that will help teachers understand individual skills of reading (see Figure 2.1 below).

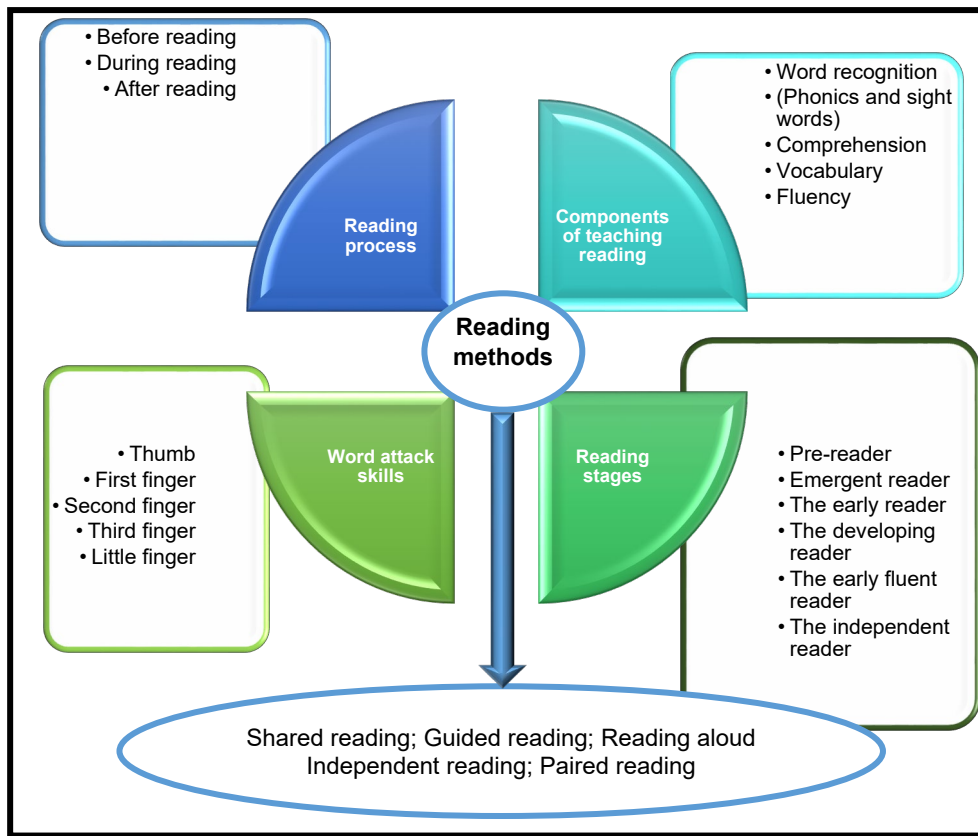


Figure 2.1: Reading methods interwoven into other reading strategies (Adapted from: Scarborough, 2001:25).

Grade assessments in reading “provided a reliable and valid measure of skills that contribute to reading acquisition” (Dubeck & Gove, 2014:315). The reading skills recommended by Dubeck and Gove (2014) indicated that EGRA assesses identification of text, phonological and orthographic knowledge, and understanding words in their written form. They emphasize that the EGRA goal is to provide information that will help in the acquisition of sufficient skills

that will develop more learning and involve more citizens. To promote the teaching of reading that is explicit, Dubeck and Gove (2014), recommend the three domains of knowledge that influence different situations.

The domains are phonological awareness (collection of skills that contribute to early reading), print knowledge (an understanding of orthographic system and written language), and orthographic knowledge. In print reading, the focus is on the stages of reading development through the process of reading. The orthographic knowledge is based on letters that form words. In using the orthographic knowledge as teachers, we will be encouraging learners to break down the unknown word in isolation and in context. This means using the word-attack skills. The development of skills supports the interwoven mechanism of developing teachers and learners through teaching reading.

2.11 READING STYLES

Tang, Kikas, Pakarinen, Lerkkanen, Muotka and Numi (2007) believe that in teaching reading, it is essential to use different reading styles to develop the reading skills in Grades 1 - 3 in Finland and Estonia. The reading styles are; child-centred, teacher-directed, child-dominated, and a combination of child-centred, teacher-directed, and the extreme-child-centred style. The child-centred style considers learners as active participants who construct knowledge through pre-knowledge and experiences, and the teacher is a facilitator, guide, and mediator. The teacher-centred style teaching is based on memorisation, where the teacher is the sole decision-maker and controller. The child-dominated style, is where the teacher gives little assistance, control, and direction to the learners. The combination of all these styles advantages both the teacher and learners in terms of equal opportunities and responsibilities for active learning and guidance.

It was determined after much research how teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classes occurs. The discovery that “there is substantial evidence to show that the teaching practice plays an important role in learners’ academic performance” prompted much attention on reading methodologies (Tang *et al.*, 2017:150-151). The Foundation Phase classes start “reading instruction’ of language around phonics. The significance of teaching reading is based on fluency and comprehension. These aspects are part of the five reading components in South African education.

Their findings concerning the child-centred style showed the highest achievement in reading fluency and reading, whereas the child-dominated approach showed the lowest reading achievement. The teachers who used either the child-centred or combined teaching style did well in reading comprehension than those who were taught through child-dominated or teacher-directed styles. The teachers who used an extreme-child-centred approach showed a low achievement of fluency than the child-centred approach (Tang *et al.*, 2017).

In addition, Kirschner *et al.* (cited in Tang *et al.*, 2017) argued that the child-dominated teaching style does not consider the learners' individual needs and differences in learning development skills. Teachers should adjust their teaching in a manner that will give each learner individual attention in the classroom. Tang *et al.* (2017) indicates that teacher-directed styles may advantage reading skills like decoding in the Foundation Phase, but fails to develop reading fluency at higher phases.

The interpretation is that in teaching reading, teachers need to use the child-centred style as supported by Dubeck and Gove (2014:317) who state that; "EGRA administration procedures are child-centred style to increase the child's comfort and increased validity of the results". The child-centred style was recommended long ago in the era of Outcome-Based Education as required by the DBE of 2008 to move away from a teacher-centred approach. This reading style requires us to give individual learner attention and to consider each learner's style of learning, but individual attention would not work because of overcrowding in our classes, unless something is done about the high teacher-learner ratio.

2.12 CONCLUSION

The chapter presented a review of the literature regarding the previous years of teaching reading. It started by discussing the theoretical framework for my study, the importance of reading, the conceptualisation of reading, teaching reading in the Foundation Phase from different contexts, the different methods used for teaching reading, teaching reading aspects, reading stages, word attack skills strategies, reading processes, and lastly the different reading styles. The next chapter (3) will focus on the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter (2) discussed literature relevant to the research question and different knowledge presented by researchers based on the teaching of reading. This chapter discusses the methodological choices made in creating a research plan to explore teachers' experiences of teaching reading in Foundation Phase classrooms. The study interest focuses on how teachers conceptualise reading, how they teach reading, the kinds of challenges they encounter when teaching reading, and how they respond to them. Firstly, the philosophical and methodological choices made are outlined; more specifically, the case study approach. Then secondly a description of the research context, the sampling strategy, and the data generation methods employed in the study; after which explanation of the data analysis process to make meaning of teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. Finally, issues of validity and ethical concerns are presented.

3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

This study is situated within an interpretivist paradigm, which focuses on how the individuals make meaning of daily events in their environment based on their perceptions, views, and understandings (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (cited in Fekede, 2010:102) see a paradigm as "the net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological and methodological premises". For Jonker and Pennink (2012:69), "a research paradigm is a set of fundamental assumptions and beliefs as to how the world is perceived, which then serves as a thinking framework that guides the behavior of the researcher".

The statement by Jonker and Pennink (2012) is relevant because, as a researcher, one need to be driven by assumptions and beliefs experienced, concerning the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase. First, a search for an appropriate research paradigm to align with teachers' experiences of teaching reading was searched. Followed by the original perceptions related to the fact that most children in the Foundation Phase cannot read. Presumably, teachers who are teaching reading in the Foundation Phase could be one of

the possible causes of the children's inability to read. Assumption is, if teachers could be capacitated with the knowledge and skills of teaching reading, then learners' reading proficiency would increase. Teachers need to be life-long learners to adapt to new techniques and strategies of teaching reading to equip children with skills that will develop fluent readers.

Thanh and Thanh (2015:1) believe that the interpretive paradigm advantages researchers to see reality according to the "perception and experiences of the participants" adding that researchers using the interpretive paradigm for answering research questions use the experiences gained to interpret their understanding based on the generated data from the participants. My study is based on real-world issues, where teachers are in contact with daily routine events in and around their classrooms.

As an interpretivism researcher, the intention was to understand how teachers interpret and make sense of their daily experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classes. As the researcher using the interpretivism paradigm at the research sites, the researcher would be able to view reality and get answers for the research questions pertaining to the teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classes. Their experience, and their responses to the research questions, would help the researcher to understand the real-life situation in the classroom concerning children's reading and their experiences.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) indicate that research methodology was developed for achieving reliability and validity as strategies to generate and analyse data, whereas Creswell (2014) contends that the research methodology is based on text, pictures, data and the role played by the researcher. Utilising, sound research methodology assists in generating data in this study. Firstly, the researcher used the research questions to elicit data from the participants at the different sites. Secondly, by being present at the site, the researcher would be able to personally assist in data generating processes mainly through questioning. By interpreting the generated data, judgement of data reliability and validity could be attained.

3.4 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Creswell (2007:37) believes that “Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.” Also, Smit (2011) argued that the qualitative approach is a manner that the researcher uses to understand the life-world of mass or individuals, how those individuals or groups use their insight to present their opinions as they are directly involved in that world. Creswell (2013)

The duty of the qualitative researcher was to identify himself/ herself with the relevant participants (teachers) for the study in order to be able to understand their opinions concerning their experiences on teaching reading in the foundation phase Taylor *et al.* (2016). The study, based on the interpretivism paradigm, also start with assumptions. The assumption that, children in the Foundation Phase cannot read. This study was based on the teachers’ experiences in teaching reading in the Foundation phase classrooms. The use of teachers in the foundation phase, was to get an insight into their experiences of teaching reading in the foundation phase because they are directly involved in that world. They are teaching reading.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

Wahyuni (2012) believed that research design is a plan that the researcher intends to use to investigate the assumption. Besides, Babbie (in de Vos *et al.* 2014) argued that research design is about the decision that the researcher makes concerning the topic that has to be studied. Whereas (McMillan & Schumacher 2014:48) stipulated that “the purposes of research design as a skill to clarify and identify valid information that will assist in answering the research questions.” In support, Bless, Higson-Smith, and Kagee (in de Vos *et al.* 2014) described the research as the requirement for obtaining relevant information for a specific context.

Through the research design as the researcher, necessary evidence of the teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the foundation phase classrooms will be obtained. The assumption (children cannot read) and the research questions (what are teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the foundation phase classrooms?) will be answered through the investigation. Clarifying and identifying the relevant information concerning the teaching of reading will be obtained from the participants by answering the interview questions.

3.5.1 Case study

The research design selected for my study is the case study. "A case study provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles" (Cohen *et al.*, 2010:289). Creswell (cited in De Vos *et al.*, 2014) explains that a case study explores issues based on time, situations, and environment. In addition, Yin (cited in Yazan, 2015:138) maintains that a "case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates the case or cases conforming to the phenomenon within a real-life context, especially where boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon, context, and by addressing the 'how' or 'why' questions concerning the phenomenon of interest."

Further, the case study will enable the researcher to understand the participants' situations in real-life settings, how they make sense to their real-life worlds, and their understanding of such world. It will clarify the study topic and explore teachers' experiences in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classrooms. It will also address the questions: how teachers teach reading; and how teachers conceptualise reading? These questions are connected to teachers' routines in their daily lives as they are involved with real-life situations of reading and teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classrooms.

3.6 RESEARCH CONTEXT AND SAMPLE

It is imperative to have the relevant information about the site of research. The researcher chose three schools from the Capricorn South District. The sites were chosen according to the purposive sampling technique. Figure 3.1 below indicates the position of the Capricorn Municipality where the study was conducted.

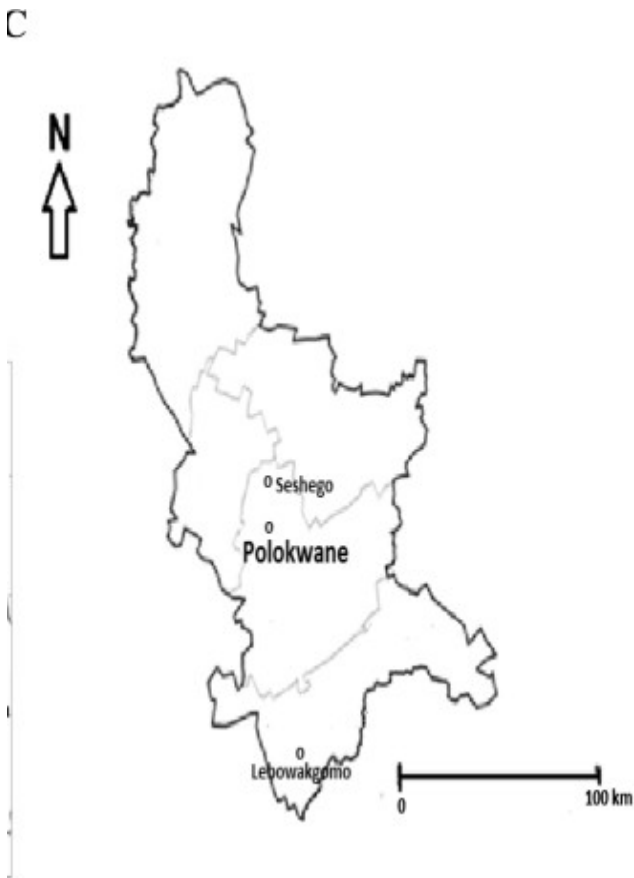


Figure 3.1: Map showing research sites' location Capricorn District Capricorn Municipality Spatial development framework (2007)

3.6.1 Selection of Schools and Research Participants

McMillan and Schumacher (2014:6) described sampling as:

A group of subjects from whom data are collected, often representative of a specific population. Sampling can be selected from a larger group of subjects, from a larger group of persons, identified as the population, or can refer to the groups of subjects from whom data are collected.

Maree (2007:79) maintains that as a qualitative researcher, sampling should be based on “probability and non-probability sampling,” where the most common forms of sampling is purposive or purposeful. Maree (2007) believed that in using purposive sampling, the researcher needs to select the participants according to the preselected condition that focus on particular research questions. In addition, Creswell (2007) adds that in purposive sampling, the researcher groups or categorises participants according to preselected criteria relevant to the main research question.

The method of sampling in this study is purposive, as it is based on the possibilities of the group of participants assisting in generating specific data. My participants were selected according to them being teachers teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. Their teaching in the Foundation Phase helped me to conceptualise my main research question: *what are the teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classrooms?*

In qualitative research, when purposive sampling is used, the researcher identifies and selects participants who would provide in-depth and rich information about the research question and the topic (Lemmer & Van Vyk, 2011). McMillan and Schumacher (2014) emphasised that purposive sampling is a strategy used to choose a small group of individuals who have relevant information concerning the study's topic. Those who were chosen for this study have an in-depth understanding and rich information concerning the research topic; that is, exploring teachers' teaching reading experiences in Foundation Phase classrooms.

The size of the sample is considered as significant in such a research project as "the sample size is related to the purpose, the research problem (children cannot read), the primary data collection strategy, and the availability of information-rich cases" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:352). In addition, De Vos *et al.* (2014) emphasised that the sample size may differ according to the data collected depending on the participants' availability and the researcher's time-schedule. In this study, six teachers with relevant information related to my research problems were available for data generation. Choosing six teachers from three different schools as the sample helped the researcher to generate data more readily because it is a manageable group-size which also allowed the researcher to get sufficient information from different experiences (rich information) from teachers' teaching reading in Foundation Phase classrooms, as indicated by the purpose of my study. The researcher's plan for selecting six participants purposively from three school community was convenient (sampling) as the participating teachers had different experiences in teaching reading in the classrooms; and this sample would provide incisive and rich information concerning the research questions and the purpose of the study. Table 3.1 below summarises the chosen participants' information.

Table 3.1: Teachers' information

| Participants (P) | Education and Training | Teaching experience in years | Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) | Grade currently teaching |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| P 1 | 4-year in-service training qualification | 18 | Sepedi | one |
| P 2 | 4-year in-service training qualification | 18 | Sepedi | three |
| P 3 | 4-year in-service training qualification | 10 | Sepedi | one |
| P 4 | 3-year diploma training qualification | 18 | Sepedi | three |
| P 5 | 3-year diploma training qualification | 10 | Sepedi | one |
| P 6 | 3-year diploma training qualification | 19 | Sepedi | one |

3.6.2 Gaining Access to the Site

Devers and Frankel (2000) designed guidelines on how to gain access to research sites and to the participants, which he believes is useful. Accordingly, the researcher should follow etiquette that requires tolerance as the process is demanding and time-consuming. Devers and Frankel (2000:266) add that to gain access to an organisation (school), the researcher needs to write a brief letter requesting permission to access the site by explaining the purpose and procedures (among others) pertaining to the intended research project (See appendices A,B and C).

As the researcher, you have to wait for approval after submitting the letter of request for the site visit. After obtaining approval, the researcher can start communicating and developing

relationships with selected participants who are interested in the study's topic. It is also crucial that the researcher has the interest of participants and their concerns at heart (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Sending the proposal of this study to the UFS Ethics Committee for approval to commence with this research project was done (See appendix F). This approval allowed the researcher to use the received ethical clearance, which permitted the request for consent from the relevant organisations (schools) to conduct my research. In addition to these requirements, Lemmer and Van Wyk (2011) advise that permission (signed consent) for the recording of interviews should also be sought.

In this case study, permission to conduct the research was obtained from the DoE District Office and from the relevant DoE Circuit officials (See appendix A and B). Once this permission was granted, confirmation of appointments with the principals of the different schools was made (See appendix C). The intention was to request permission to interview the Foundation Phase teachers. The appointments to inform principals about the details of the study, and to get participants' input concerning the research topic we made. The principals of the different schools also assisted in getting into contact with the Foundation Phase heads of department (HODs), who in turn, spoke to the teachers to find out if they were willing to voluntarily participate in this study.

Meetings were arranged with those teachers who were willing to participate in the study. During meetings, explanations of the research purpose, procedures, and participants' responsibilities in the research process were presented. Discussions relating to issues related to anonymity, confidentiality, privacy, and ethics were addressed. The teachers were informed that they could remove themselves from the research process at any stage without being disadvantaged in any way. Once the interested teachers had signed the consent forms, (See appendix E) negotiation of times and dates for the interviews were agreed upon. Table 3.2 below outlines the times and dates for the interviews.

Table 3.2: The semi-structured interview schedule

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Item</i> | <i>Action</i> | <i>Due date</i> | <i>Time</i> | <i>Duration</i> |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|
|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|

| | | | | | |
|------------|--|---|-------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| 29/08/2018 | Interview at school A with teacher-participant 1 and 4 | One-on-one interview using audio-recorder | 29/08/ 2018 | 10:00 to 11:00 | 30 minutes per participant |
| 16/08/2018 | Interview at school B with teacher-participant 3 and 6 | One-on-one interview using audio-recorder | 16/08/2018 | 12:00 to 13:00 | 30 minutes per participant |
| 27/08/2018 | Interview at school C with teacher-participant 2 and 5 | One-on-one interview using audio-recorder | 27/08/2018 | 08:30 to 09:00 | 30 minutes per participant |

3.7 METHODS OF DATA GENERATION AND PROCEDURE

De Vos *et al.* (2014) see data generation as a process when the researcher accesses information by directly interacting with an individual or a group of people who have relevant and rich information that aligns with the research topic. Different types of qualitative data generation methods can be used such as document analysis, observation, focus group discussions (FGDs), and interviews. As explained by Creswell (2014), the researcher sets the stage for gathering data and creates appropriate boundaries. In the case of this study, the researcher found semi-structured interviews and observations to be most appropriate.

3.7.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Cohen *et al.*, (2010) maintain that in semi-structured interviews, there is a give-and-take exchange where the interviewer asks the participant (interviewee) questions related to the research study in order to generate data, to learn more about the participant, and to see the world through the world-view of the participant See appendix G). A semi-structured interview is seen as a flexible and powerful research generation tool for the researcher. Saunders,

Lewis and Thornhill (cited in Wahyuni, 2012:14) contend that a semi-structured interview “is a hybrid type of interview which lies between structured and in-depth interviews”. De Vos *et al.* (2014) explain that in the semi-structured interview, the researcher is in direct contact with the participant to get an explicit and holistic picture in order to anticipate answers to questions on the research topic.

In generating data, semi-structured interviews were used because of the advantages that it presented for the researcher’s study. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to have a more flexible structure that is usually organised around an interview guide. It created an interactive environment between the researcher and the participant, because it allows face-to-face interaction with the participants. It also granted the opportunity to have control over the questions while maintaining its flexible nature. Semi-structured interviews gave a clear picture of what was happening in the classes. The teachers’ responses to the interview questions provided rich-information concerning their experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classrooms.

3.7.2 Interview Process

Bloom and Crabtree (2006:318) emphasise that “the in-depth interview is meant to be a personal and intimate encounter in which open-ended, verbal questions are used to elicit detailed narratives and stories”. Myburgh and Struss (2000) identify interviews as a prerequisite for the researcher to generate relevant information from the participants who are directly in contact with the site of research. Denzil and Lincoln (2000) expressed that semi-structured interviews give researchers time to question participants as individuals without creating boundaries. Semi-structured interviews start by asking pre-determined prepared questions that allow the participants to freely express their ideas and experiences.

Bloom and Crabtree (2006) state that semi-structured interviews should briefly acknowledge the “life history” of interviewees as it discloses biography for understanding the participant’s background. In the researcher’s interview questions, the questions required participants’ biographies; for example, tell me about yourself, who you are, where do you come from, and what is your childhood background? The questions were also verbal, as the researcher was directly in physical contact with the participant. The questions, which were planned, helped to understand the historical background of the participants, in addition to their teaching reading experiences in the Foundation Phase.

Further, Bloom and Crabtree (2006) acknowledge that for the participant to be interviewed positively, the first question should be broad and open-ended to create a comfortable environment for the participants. During the interviews, the first question was open-ended - tell me about yourself? This question was not intimidating to the participant; it made them feel at ease to freely express themselves during the interview. Additionally, instilled mutual trust and respect in participants during the entire research process, which also made them feel safe and comfortable.

Moreover, McMillan and Schumacher (2014:386) believe that "qualitative interviewers prefer a conversational tone to indicate empathy and understanding while conveying acceptance to encourage elaboration of subtle and valid data". Starting by asking open-ended questions led to a conversation that helped the researcher to make clear distinctions on aspects of the topic that led to rich data generation.

Bloom and Crabtree (2006) indicate that the information elicited from interviews and observations should be recorded and later analysed. One can use an audio-recorder/video recorder, camera or take notes. The most used method (with the signed consent of the participants) for verbal interviews is audio-recording, which must be later transcribed.

Wahyuni (2012:74) states that the interviews and observations should start with an explanation of the research purpose and objective, followed by explaining issues of "confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary nature of the study". The researcher should also hand out consent forms for signing by all participants. The participant should also grant permission for recording the interview. In this study, audio-recorder was used, and consent forms were duly signed by all participants before the interviews. The consent forms indicated that their names, school names, and responses, were confidential and anonymous; pseudonyms or codes will be used to protect identities (See appendix E).

Maree (2007) indicated that by audio-recording the interview, the researcher would be able to generate data speedily. In support, Creswell (2014) advised that interview responses need to be tape-recorded to save time. Data was recorded through audio- recording individual participants. The interviews were on a face-to-face basis, and each participant was given 30 minutes to respond to the open-ended questions.

Bloom and Crabtree (2006:315) indicate that; "the individual in-depth interview allows the interviewer to delve deeply into social and personal matters, whereas the group interviews

allow interviewers to get a wider range of experience, but, because of the public nature of the process it prevents delving as deeply into the group like the individual”.

In addition, Petty, Thomson and Stew (2012:4) state that; "the conduct of semi-structured interviews involves a few pre-determined areas of interest with possible prompts to help and guide the conversation”. The open-ended questions helped me to delve deeply into the social and personal backgrounds of the participants.

Questions need repetition (if necessary) for the interviewee to clearly interpret the question before deciding how to answer the question. Probing techniques were used, In order to get clarity or further information on the said question, which helped to draw a subtle distinction between the participants' responses and their views. As such, the intention of eliciting in-depth rich information from teachers teaching reading was also accomplished.

After the interview, the researcher needs to determine the crucial aspects raised and to identify the similarities and differences in data (De Vos *et al.*, 2014). All the data from the interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and analysed according to set procedures which enabled the researcher to also acquire an understanding of teachers' attitudes of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classrooms. As such, the researcher was able to answer the main research question: *what are teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the foundation phase classrooms?*

Table 3.3: The classroom observation schedule

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Item</i> | <i>Action</i> | <i>Due date</i> | <i>Time</i> | <i>Duration</i> |
|-------------|--|---|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| 30/08/2018 | Observation at school A with teacher-participant 1 and 4 | Face to face observation using video camera, camera and notes taking. | 30/08/ 2018 | 10:00 to 12:00 | 60 minutes per participant |
| 17/08/2018 | Observation at school B with teacher-participant 3 and 6 | Face to face observation using video camera, camera and notes taking | 17/08/2018 | 11:00 to 13:00 | 60 minutes per participant |

| | | | | | |
|------------|--|---|------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| 31/08/2018 | Observation at school C with teacher-participant 2 and 5 | Face to face observation using video camera, camera and notes taking. | 31/08/2018 | 08:30 to 09:30 | 60 minutes per participant |
|------------|--|---|------------|----------------|----------------------------|

3.7.3 Classroom Observations

Observation according to Angrosino, (cited in Creswell 2013:188) “is the act of noting a phenomenon in the field setting through the five senses of the observer, often with an instrument, and recording it for scientific purposes”. Meaning through observation the researcher will be able to use different perceptions to understand the context of teaching reading. De Vos *et al.*, (2014) maintain that observations are the same, and depend on direct contact with the participant. Creswell (2013) believes that observations rely on the researchers’ intentions and questions. Those questions are answered by being in that environment, and being in contact with the participants, interactions, and actions. This process allowed face-to-face contact with the participant in their different classes teaching reading. The observations are reliable because they provide valuable information related to activities and behaviours in relation to the teaching of reading. A clear picture of how the six teachers present their reading lessons, and how learners respond, and the impacts teachers and learners encounter when teaching reading. Thus, addressing the research questions like; *How teachers teach reading? What are challenges teachers experience when teaching reading? and how do teachers respond to those challenges?* This observation will assist in drawing facts from interviews and literature review.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Wahyuni (2012) indicated that data analysis is based on creating meaning from the generated data. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:395) see data analysis as “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among categories. Even though the analytical methods are different depending on researchers in general, their induction procedures and their techniques are the same”. Accordingly, data was analysed to create sense-making, that helped the researcher to

understand teachers' experiences in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classes. The generated data was categorised to determine patterns and relationships.

Merriam (cited in Yazan, 2015) defined data analysis as the steps to be used to make meaning from the generated data. The researcher needs to take the generated data from participants and interpret, synthesise, and combine such information into a single unit. Wahyuni (2012:75) believes that qualitative data analysis is about reaching a conclusion based on evidence and reasoning from raw data, and indicates that; "performing data analysis on qualitative data involves dismantling, segmentation and [assembling] data to form meaningful [patterns] in order to draw inferences". In analysing data in this study, the researcher firstly listens to the audio-recordings, view recording and camera, read the transcriptions, and then critically dissect the six participants' responses. Finally, dismantle and re-assemble the information to determine their reasoning based on the interview questions and the observation questions.

3.8.1 Analytical Procedures

During data analysis, the researcher makes sense of the data by segmenting the data and then putting it back together. Data was analyzed using the steps advised by McMillan and Schumacher (2014:399-400) to "get a sense of the whole". To do this the researcher, first took the raw recorded data from the semi-structured interviews and transcribed them into written text and then assigned initial codes to categories of data. Creswell (2014) state that coding is the process of organising data by grouping large amounts and classifying them appropriately.

In this study, each of the six participants were given code as their responses are significantly large, because each participant is given thirty minutes to respond in the semi-structured interviews. Their codes are P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6. In support, Creswell (2012) argued that coding is about taking the information generated during the interviews and labelling them into categories that are titled based on the participants' language. Coding helped in interpreting each participant's different views. Their responses were used to construct meaning, and to understand their views concerning teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classes.

3.9 ETHICS

Ethical issues are considered necessary during all phases of the research process. Bloom and Crabtree (2006:321) emphasised that during the generation of data process, it is essential to consider “reducing the risk of unanticipated harm, protecting the interviewee’s information, effectively informing interviewees about the nature of the study, and reducing the risk of exploitation”. In support, Israel and Hay (2014) explain that researchers should protect their participants, be trustworthy, develop quality in their research study, and be aware of unacceptable behaviour that may jeopardise the research process.

To ensure that my research was ethical, several procedures were followed. Firstly, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the University of the Free State Ethics Committee, as the enrolled masters student. Obtained the ethical clearance certificate, (See appendix F) which granted the right to request for permission to gain access to sites for the research, in three different school. Through the help of the principals, the researcher was able to meet the Foundation Phase teachers.

Explanation of the purpose and topic of the study was made and the reason why they are needed to be part of the research was clearly presented. The teachers were informed that their participation was voluntary (See appendix D). The teachers who volunteered to participate in the research were told that they were free to withdraw from the research process at any time without being disadvantaged in any way if they felt uncomfortable to proceed with the process. The participants were briefly informed about the interview process, and that an audio-recorder would be used during the interview. The video recorder and camera will be used during observation.

The participants were informed about the consent forms that they were to sign. The researcher explained to them that the consent form also explains anonymity and confidentiality (See Appendix E). They were also assured that their recorded interview and responses including the video images would not be accessed by anyone except the researcher. Their school names and their names will not be disclosed and used. Pseudonyms will be used when analysing data. Also, participants will be free from harm (physical or mental) and exploitation, and that they will be protected as agreed upon through the signing of the consent forms by both parties (researcher and participants).

3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Throughout the research, the researcher strived for trustworthiness. Gibbs (cited in Creswell, 2014) stated that validity is the process that the researcher uses to identify the accuracy of the research work. McMillan and Schumacher (2014: 190) indicated that “to assure validity, the researcher needs to identify assumptions or make arguments to justify an inference or use for a specific purpose”. Lub (2015), like Creswell, confirms that validity is an instrument that the researcher uses to measure the accuracy of the research content.

Trustworthiness is an important aspect that requires researchers to produce authentic findings. Yilmaz (2013:321) explained that “for a study to be credible and trustworthy, the data must first and foremost be sufficiently descriptive and include a great deal of pure description of people, activities, interactions, and settings so that the reader or reviewer can understand what occurred and how it occurred”. De Vos (2014) adds that the critical aspects of trustworthiness are credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability.

3.10.1 Credibility

"Credibility is the extent to which the results of an approximate study's reality is judged to be trustworthy and reasonable" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 2). McMillan and Schumacher (2014) and De Vos *et al.* (2014) maintain that credibility models the inquiry done in a manner that shows the main issue was correctly determined, where the researcher determines the views of the participants, how the researchers constructed meaning, and how the researcher represents them. To ensure credibility in this study as a researcher, thirty minutes was spent with each of the six days doing in-depth interviews. Through the interviews, the researcher was able to generate the relevant information from Foundation Phase teachers who responded verbally to the interview questions. This revealed that the main issue was correctly dissected, that the researcher precisely interpreted the participants' views, showed how the researcher constructed meaning, and how the researcher represented them.

Credibility is based on the generated data, that a researcher generated by collaborating closely with the participants throughout the process of the study (Creswell & Miller 2000). In this case, to ensure credibility the researcher engaged with six participants for sixty minutes with each of the six days doing extensive engagement. Firstly, through the classroom observations the researcher was able to see how the teachers taught reading. Secondly,

the researcher was able to view how the learners participate, responds, and engage with the teacher to construct meaning from text, as required in social constructivism theory.

3.10.2 Confirmability

Wahyuni (2012) states that confirmability is about how others confirm the findings to determine if the outcomes are accurate reflections from the participants. Yilmaz (2013) explains confirmability as findings made after analysing the generated data and evaluating it through the auditing process. In ensuring confirmability in this study, the researcher used the audio-recorder for interview process and video recorder for observations process to “back-up” findings concerning research topic.

3.10.3 Dependability

Petty *et al.* (2015:5) define dependability as an “an audit trail of procedures and processes carried out by the researcher to enable a judgement to be made by another”. To ensure dependability, all steps of the research process and procedures were explained. The researcher also used the interview question schedule video and audio-recorder as tools for generating data from the six participants in the Foundation Phase classes from three different schools.

3.10.4 Transferability

Wahyuni (2012) defined transferability as a validation of whether the information collected can work in other contexts. To ensure transferability, purposive sampling was used, the foundation phase teachers, and the schools to generate data. The findings were information rich. The in-depth findings gleaned from the participants’ responses would allow others to apply them in their own contexts.

3.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher focused on the research methodology to answer my research question: *how do teachers experience the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase classroom?* The researcher explained the research context and samples for data generation purposes. The researcher also elaborated on the two methods of data generation and indicated how the researcher will analyse the data. The issue of ethics and ensuring trustworthiness was outlined. Chapter four that follows, will focus on data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF TEACHING READING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter (3) discussed research methodology and research design. This chapter (4), present an analysis of the semi-structured interviews to address the research question and the sub-research questions. Chapter 5 will present analysis of the classroom observation. The main research question is; *What are the teachers' experiences in teaching reading at the Foundation Phase?* The following are my sub-research questions:

- How do teachers conceptualise reading?
- How do teachers teach reading?
- What are the challenges that teachers' experience when teaching reading?
- How do teachers respond to these challenges?

The study aims to explore the experiences that teachers encounter when teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed that teachers had particular conceptualisations of reading; and these emerged from their teacher training and childhood memories of learning. Additionally, teachers talked about the reading methodologies that they used to enhance the reading potential of their learners in their classrooms. They also talked about the challenges they experienced in the teaching of reading, and how they responded to these challenges. In this chapter, I therefore, discuss the four themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of data. These themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 4.1 below, which served as a framework for the discussions that follow.

Table 4.1: Themes and sub-themes

| Research Questions | Themes | Sub-themes |
|--|--|--|
| <i>Research Question 1:</i> How do teachers' conceptualise reading? | <i>Theme 1:</i> How teachers understand reading | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childhood memories • Teacher-training |
| <i>Research Question 2:</i> How do teachers teach reading? | <i>Theme 2:</i> Teaching reading based on the sub-themes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading methodologies • Resources • Modelling reading behaviour • Reading activities (Teachers' and learners' activities) |
| <i>Research Question 3:</i> What are the challenges that teachers experience when teaching reading? | <i>Theme 3:</i> Teachers' challenges when teaching reading | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental involvement • Overcrowded classrooms • Language of learning and teaching (LoLT) • Resources • Memorisation |
| <i>Research Question 4:</i> How do teachers respond to these challenges? | <i>Theme 4:</i> Teachers' responsiveness to challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide learners into smaller groups • Use different illustrations and games-playing situations • Parental motivation • Instill love for reading |

In the next section, I unpack the different meanings of how teachers understand reading.

4.2 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF READING

The above theme emerged from the question posed to the participants' during the interviews. I stated the question as follows: *What do you understand by the concept reading?* I asked this question with the purpose of determining the cause of the huge percentage of learners who struggle to read in the Foundation Phase and its connection to the challenge teachers experience when developing reading skills. This enabled me to detect from the participants' responses that their beliefs and attitudes influenced their understanding of teaching reading.

Previous research highlighted that teachers hold underlying and sometimes fossilised beliefs regarding the teaching of reading (Barr *et al.* in Fang, 1996). In response to the above question, the participants' expressed the following:

P1: Reading is about developing the child; what the child reads becomes what the child writes...a child is born as an incidental reader.

P2: Reading is about making sense of print, visualising and attaching meaning.

P3: Reading is about spelling, sounds, blending and decoding in order to be able to read.

It is evident from the participants' responses that they presented different conceptualisations of what reading meant to them. For example, P1 believed that what the child reads, he/she transfers it to what the child writes. She links reading to writing. According to her, learners need exposure to both skills (reading and writing) at an early age. Thus, P1 concurs with Gove and Cvelich (2010) and Omidire (2018) who assert that by exposing learners to both skills, it will assist in developing learners' confidence and knowledge on how to read and write at an early age.

The in-depth discussion of the "top-down" approach in chapter 2 (2.10), implies that learners, as readers, create meaning by using their prior knowledge, predictions, speculations and questions to understand text, which evidently reflects the

understanding of P2 on reading. The reason behind this notion is that, in her response P2 clearly states that reading is about “*making sense of print, visualising and attaching meaning*”. In Nordquist’s terms (2018), it means that her understanding highlights the “top-down” approach, which focuses on assuming the meaning of text. In other words, reading is about making-sense of text by using prior-knowledge and predictions. This approach has its roots in the Psycholinguistic Theory, which emphasises that learners, as readers, benefit by making predictions from their knowledge to understand their reading.

In contrast to P2, P3’s conceptualisation of reading falls within a “bottom-up” approach, which centres on the achievement of skills required for reading. As I indicated in chapter 2 (2.10), this approach is about decoding letters into words, phrases, and sentences. In fact, Dechant (1991) believes that a “bottom-up” reading approach emphasises a single-direction, from part-to-whole processing of text. Hence, P3 believes that reading is about using spelling, phonology, blending, and decoding. Evidently, P3 understands that in teaching reading, she must start from breaking down words into letters and syllables before pronouncing the whole word, leading to the part-to-whole processing of the text (Dechant, 1991; Lenjani, 2018).

From the above responses, it is evident that participants’ conceptualisation of reading varies as their individual beliefs influence it. All the participants explained their understanding of the skill of reading from different perspectives. I noted that P2 and P3 explained the concept of reading from the behaviorist theoretical point of departure, while P2 explained reading from the psycholinguistic theoretical perspective, in line with Goodman’s explanation (1971). Though the participants differ in their conceptualisation of reading, they all agreed that it is about equipping learners with different skills that assist in making sense of the text at an early age. However, Lenjani (2018) and Dechant (1991) hold a different opinion about the “bottom-up” approach, as they believe that it only focuses on observable behaviours and disregards the mind-independent activities. Conversely, Goodman (1971) and Nordquist (2018) support the “top-down” approach, as it promotes mental activities.

Significantly, the two approaches complement each other in that each cannot function successfully without the other. Therefore, it is imperative to use both approaches when teaching reading as they are integrated with the prescribed components of teaching reading. In line with recommendations of Australia concerning the components of teaching reading in chapter 2 (2.5.2). Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) believe that incorporating comprehension skills as a tool for constructing meaning and strategies on decoding, assist in developing learners to be competent readers, unlike using one skill which makes them struggle to read. Both approaches help learners develop reading skills that they can use when making sense of texts and this has a carry-over value into writing skills. In my opinion the use of both approaches can develop reading in Foundation Phase. The discussion below centres on childhood memories as another sub-theme.

4.2.1 Childhood Memories

The above discussion on teachers' understanding of what reading entails included the conceptualising of reading, such that *childhood memories* emerged as another sub-theme. All participants indicated that their childhood memories influenced their understanding of reading. Memorisation was the primary method to teach reading during their time and era. In response to the interview question about their conceptualisation of reading, the participants stated the following:

P3: During my childhood, I was taught to memorise. Presently learners read through understanding.

P5: Teachers were the only ones having books. Reading was based on memorisation. We were reading without understanding.

P6: We learnt through memorisation, and it was good when we recalled what we memorised at the later stage.

It is evident from the participants' responses that memorisation had an impact on their teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase classrooms. What is evident is

that childhood memories can either have a negative or positive influence on the teaching of reading. I noted that P3 and P5 compare their childhood memories of reading lessons with the present teaching methods of reading. Further, both participants acknowledge that teachers should teach learners to read with understanding. A drawback highlighted by P5 was that teachers were the only ones who were in possession of reading books. The implication is that financial constraints of the school did not allow for learners to have readers.

Furthermore, P5 implied that the lack of reading books hindered the process of reading for understanding as highlighted by Ramabenyane (2012; 2013). This situation is an indication that the teacher had to use the teacher-centred approach to reading, which emphasised memorisation as a learning technique (Tang *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, P6 indicated the benefits of learning to read through memorisation was that they, as learners, were able to recall the contents of what they had read. This required repetition and rote-learning of information rather than understanding content. The implication is that memorisation is still relevant in the reading process, but teachers should not overuse it as a reading technique.

Following on what P6 indicated above, Burns (2006:176) acknowledges that memorisation is a significant teaching technique; therefore, it should be used with caution, as it mainly develops the “visual memory” of the learner, especially for “spelling practice” and dictation. However, learning through repetition contradicts the Social Constructivist theory, as advocated by Vygotsky (1978) and by Donald *et al.* (2008). These authors emphasise active and interactive learning of mediating the appropriate structures and strategies of a particular knowledge area. According to this theory, teaching reading should include facilitating learners to make sense of the reading content and thus construct meaning as mentioned by P3 and P5. The more they memorised the content, the more difficult it got for them to construct meaning.

The implications for classroom teaching is that during reading lessons, the learners need to engage or interact with the text to construct meaning through immersion in the text. As such, the teacher will be able to assist learners when they struggle to

read and take them to a stage until the learners can read independently; then the teacher withdraws her/his assistance (scaffolding). The participants' childhood memories have a significant influence and contributes to how they teach reading and how they (participants) learned to read during their early childhood years, as seen below.

P1: My grandfather, who wanted me to read at an early age, influenced me. I read old newspapers brought by my mother and family members who worked in Gauteng as domestic workers. Reading old newspapers made me become a fluent reader in grade three. I also learnt that reading should happen every day.

P2: I grew up in a family where reading materials were available as my parents were both teachers. I had the opportunity to engage with reading materials. I also read newspapers and magazines.

P5: During my childhood, I was unable to read. My teacher helped me to read. In the past, there were no conversational pictures.

P1 was motivated to learn to read by her grandfather who brought her old newspapers. She was encouraged to engage with texts long before she went to school. Similarly, P2 was fortunate to have grown up in a family where reading materials were readily available. In contrast, P5's home environment was not as conducive to encouraging reading as that of P1 and P2, but she was encouraged to learn to read by her teacher at school. In other words, she had started to engage with the text only when she commenced schooling.

Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) and Spaul and Hoadley (2017) confirm that learners who engage with texts at an early age, become more prepared for reading instruction as is the case with P1 and P2. Even though they could not literally read, they were able to interpret pictures and attach meaning to them. Learners like P5, who never engaged with text at an early age, were unprepared for reading instruction.

Vygotsky's theory (1978), as explained by Donald *et al.* (2008), maintains that learners learn through modelling and mediating text. The learners use modelling to internalise what the teacher, as the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) demonstrates or models to them. In this instance, P1's grandfather assisted in mediation. While the parents of P2 also played the role of mediation, they consolidated learning processes by modelling reading because teachers and reading materials were always available.

The early childhood memories discussed in this study from the participants' points of view revealed that childhood memories stay in the participants' minds forever, whether good or bad. This notion indicates that childhood memories have an influence on the participants' teaching of reading. Below is a discussion on the sub-theme based on the participants' professional training.

4.2.2 Teacher-training

As the participants elaborated on their understanding of the concept *reading*, the second sub-theme on how they received training as teachers emerged. It surfaced that their initial pre-service training at different institutions of Higher Learning, and the in-service training in the form of workshops provided by the Department of Education, had some bearing on how they understood the concept *reading*.

P1: I was one of the teachers who specialised in Foundation Phase at WITS. By going for training, I am able to apply what I learnt. I have confidence to model reading. I am able to do research for more activities that I can use in the classroom. Truly speaking, that training made me a better teacher.

P2: I thank Dr Motswaledi for the four years of training at WITS for specialisation in Foundation Phase. It prepared me to develop the love for teaching reading. I love to model shared reading and explore guided reading.

P3: I was fortunate to be sent by Minister Motswaledi to the University of KwaZulu Natal, to develop as a quality teacher in the Foundation Phase.

It was noted that P1, P2, and P3 regard themselves as suitably qualified to teach at the Foundation Phase level since they received their training at institutions of higher learning as indicated in Table 3.1. Further, P1 claims that her training has developed her confidence to model reading, while P2 indicates that the four-year specialisation in Foundation Phase at WITS helped him develop the love for teaching reading. Khan and Irshadullah (2018) believe that highly-trained teachers enhance and improve their teaching strategies, activities, and model effective teaching content that is meaningful.

Although the following participants are qualified to teach in the Foundation Phase, they found the training that takes place through workshops were just as important and informative, as indicated below:

P4: By attending the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) and OBE workshops helped a lot. My breakthrough method of teaching helped me to be able to teach reading.

P5: By attending NECT and OBE workshops, I got a lot of help. My breakthrough teaching method also had an impact on my teaching of reading.

P6: We attended the NECT workshop not long ago. At the workshop, I learnt about guided reading. I did not know what was expected of me when teaching guided reading and how to group learners for guided reading. Now I know that guided reading is about grouping learners according to their reading abilities.

Based on the participants' responses, it is evident that teachers had adequate training to help them to teach learners how to read through the use of different reading methodologies such as guided-reading and the breakthrough method of teaching reading. The training programmes capacitated them to teach reading more effectively. According to Rule's (2017) research, when some of the participants were asked how they teach reading, they responded that they teach the way they were taught; hence, the cycle is not broken. When teachers test reading, they do not test for meaning making, but rather for fluency and pronunciation.

The participants felt that teaching reading would be meaningful when they utilise appropriate reading methodologies, resources, modelling, and innovative reading activities. These responses emerged from a question aimed at understanding how teachers teach reading in their classrooms.

4.2.3 Reading Methodologies

Both participants and researcher, discussed the reading methodologies pertaining to teaching reading during the interview process. Three participants mentioned that some reading methodologies facilitated their teaching of reading in their classrooms. Below are responses by participants:

P1: Presently, I do shared reading. In shared reading, my learners are encouraged to do picture walk, prediction, pronunciation and sounding. I also use paired reading where I paired a strong reader with the weak reader for peer assessment. In guided reading, I guide learners through the reading processes.

P3: In shared reading, I read aloud and the learners listen. In the second step, I read and the children read after me. During post-reading, the learners role-play, re-tell or dramatise the story.

P4: In shared reading, I use the big book. For pre-reading, we talk about the cover page. The learners need to talk about the pictures (picture walk), the author, and the title of the book.

P5: I always use guided reading to develop learners to read fluently. I also use shared reading to develop prediction skills in learners and to allow them to associate the text with their contexts.

P6: I like to use storybooks to read aloud to my learners. I also use independent reading, paired reading. I sometimes give the learners who can read storybooks to read at home. I also use paired reading.

All five participants acknowledged the importance of the shared reading methodology. Also, P3 stated that she used pre-reading, during-reading, and post-

reading strategies in her shared reading lessons. In line with the discussion on shared reading in chapter 2 (2.6.2), P1 and P4 made use of techniques such as picture walk, cover page talk, pronunciation, and phonics. All participants were aware that shared reading is one of the essential methodologies recommended by the DBE (2004; 2008). Evidently, the participants had incisive content knowledge of the shared reading methodology to apply it in the Foundation Phase classes.

Additionally, P1 indicated that in her shared reading lessons, she encouraged her learners to read the pictures and attach meaning to the pictures. She also encouraged the learners to make predictions, practise correct pronunciation, and perform appropriate sounding. Shared reading, according to P5, was to develop prediction skills in learners and to associate the text with their real-life contexts. According to Dugger (2019), the teachers believe that shared reading is an interactive reading experience where the learners share one book for reading with the teachers' guidance. As indicated by P1 and P5, during shared reading lessons, both the teacher and learners read orally and collaborate using the same book.

Moreover, P1 and P5 highlighted that they use guided reading; P1 indicated that she used guided reading to guide the learners through reading, while P5 indicated that she used guided reading to develop reading fluency. Both participants understood the use and purpose of the guided reading methodology. In support of the guided reading technique, studies by Hansen (2016) maintain that guided reading is a tool that provides the teachers with the opportunity to support small groups of learners. These learners must be on the same level of development to apply previously learnt strategies to a new text that suits their level of development in order to read independently, and without challenges.

Although the participants mainly used shared reading and group-guided reading strategies as an indication of their knowledge of the prescribed reading methodologies in the Foundation Phase (DBE, 2008), P1 and P6 mentioned that they use paired reading. P1 paired a weak learner with a good reader to build collaboration elements, and to encourage support and cooperation from one learner to assist another (Simon, n.d).

In line with the discussion on reading aloud in chapter 2 (2.6.4), which highlights the role of an adult or teacher in modelling or demonstrating to the learners how to pronounce and sound the words in the text, P6 highlighted that she uses storybooks to read aloud to the learners. Through reading aloud to the learners, P6 assists the learners to build critical thinking and information-processing skills suggested by Ledger and Merga (2018). The learners are also encouraged to construct meaning from the text while observing the teacher demonstrating fluency and expression in reading. Reading aloud promotes the Social Constructivism theory explained by Donald *et al.* (2008) where interaction with learners to understand a specific concept by constructing meaning, is the norm. Although P6 mentioned that she uses the reading aloud strategy in teaching reading, she (like the other participants) was comfortable in presenting her lesson normally by using the shared reading method. Based on Vygotsky's theory (1987), the participants fulfilled their role as the MKOs when using the shared reading method to teach learners how to read. Although P6 claimed to be using the reading aloud technique, she also stated that she uses the independent reading technique. Pilgreen (cited in Harcourt, n.d.) and Joubert *et al.* (2013) indicate that independent reading supports and develops learners to achieve autonomy to read the book of their choice for the sake of enjoyment or reading for pleasure. However, none of the participants presented a lesson on independent reading. Evidently, as the MKO in Vygotsky's constructivist theory (1978), participants were still hesitant to interact meaningfully with the learners using this methodology, which facilitates the acquisition of critical reading skills to develop critical-thinking.

4.2.4 Resources

Participants' responses in the interviews concerning the use of resources in teaching reading indicated that they used a variety of resources to arouse the learners' interest. Below are the participants' responses elicited during interviews on how they used resources in teaching reading.

P1: Presently I use puppets, big books with good illustrations, and pictures. Illustrations help learners to create their own text. Pictures help them to learn

by seeing and then reading becomes easier. I also use flashcards and pictures to develop reading interest. I also use reader-theatre, where children are given a stack of newspapers. The children use these papers to practise reading with their parents' assistance.

P5: I always use verbal illustrations, flashcards, pictures and books in developing a love for reading among learners.

P6: I use readers, to read stories to the learners. I also give learners books to read at home.

All the participants acknowledged the significance of using resources when teaching reading in their classrooms. In support, studies by Fan-Wei (2017) reveal that learner- support materials motivate and arouse learners' interest. The participants identified resources like puppets, flashcards, illustrations, reading books, and readers. In addition to the use of illustrations, P1 mentioned reader-theatre, which according to Burns (2006), means a style of play where actors present a dramatic reading of historical materials while seated, and without costumes and props. Reader theatre improves reading fluency, reading comprehension, vocabulary, decoding skills, and word knowledge (Young *et al.*, 2019).

Importantly, the participants acknowledged the importance of using learning materials to increase learners' curiosity to explore knowledge independently (Right, 2018). Jones (2019:6) agrees that the use of "concrete apparatus provides a concrete representation that can initially open the door to developing understanding for a challenging topic being studied". Chawla (n.d.) advises that classrooms need to be print-rich to allow learners to engage with written language meaningfully. The next discussion is on modelling reading behaviour.

4.2.5 Modelling Reading

Modelling reading is one of the sub-themes raised by the participants when responding to the interview question based on how they teach reading. Their responses are as follows:

P1: *I model reading to my children by breaking down words like m-a-t, m-at. Learners should know the beginning, middle and end of a sound. In guided reading, I sit with the group of learners and do modelling for the learners.*

P4: *I read and the children listen. In the second reading stage (re-reading), I read and the learners read after me.*

P6: *I use readers to read stories to the learners, and I also explain such stories.*

Although P1 used the example of an English word *mat* to model how she decodes words into syllables and phonemes, a Sepedi word /*letlakala*/ (page) can be decoded into syllables /*e/ /tla/ /ka/ /la/* and as phonemes /*/ /e/ /t/ /a/ /k/ /a/ /l/ and /a/*. Besides the different and similar strategies that participants used in teaching reading at Foundation Phase, it is clear that they are aware also of the significance of modelling. Modelling is one of the skills that teachers use to assist learners in mastering reading; especially Sepedi phonics, and pronunciation. Hill (cited in Moosa, 2018) justifies that learning from teacher-demonstrations is a way of modeling, which is an effective approach and a meaningful learning strategy of teaching reading.

4.2.6 Teacher and Learner Reading Activities

Another sub-theme that emerged from the participants' responses during the interviews about teaching reading centred on reading activities. According to DBE (2011), reading activities are performed by the teachers and learners to develop reading proficiency in the classroom. The participants responded as follows:

P1: *I use puppets, together with big books with illustrations and pictures. I sit with the group of learners and I model reading to my children by breaking down words like mat (m-a-t= m-at). I write sight words in bright colours because sight words make reading easier. It also assists learners to comprehend and have a clear understanding of what they read. I also use spelling tests.*

P2: I use a range of activities for reading. A basic activity will be phonemic awareness. Learners should first recognise the letters in the words. I teach the learners the sounds for them to recognise text.

P6: I use readers to read stories to learners, and I also do explanations of such stories. I tell learners stories. I also give learners books to read at home.

From the above excerpts, it is evident that P1 believes in using puppets, big books with illustrations, sight words written in bright colours, and pictures as tools for developing reading. These teaching resources, according to Hakim and Rohman (2019), provide stimulation for learners to be effectively involved in teaching and learning.

Also, P2 used a range of activities for reading with the main activities focusing on phonemic awareness, recognition of words, and pronunciation; while P6 indicated that her activities were based largely on reading stories to learners. All the participants planned activities around the teaching of reading. Hence, by using these constructivist activities, participants mediate and create interactive learning spaces for their learners who actively construct knowledge through meaningful interactions.

The three participants used these activities as mediation tools and strategies for stimulating the learning environment via the ZPD principle in terms of encouragement, assistance, and guidance from the MKOs. McLeod (2019:3) describes the MKO as “someone with a better understanding or higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task, process and concept” and hence, teachers through their mediation and guidance, can assist learners to achieve what they were unable to achieve. Further, learning through observation aligns with the Social Constructivist theory, where the teacher, as the MKO in teaching reading, “models” to the learners what he/she knows. In her response, P1, a reflective teacher, indicated that she read first and then asked the learners to read after her. Spalding (2020:1) defines a reflective teacher one who “has the ability to reflect on what, why and how they do things, and to adapt and develop their excellence in teaching is the one quality above all that makes them good”. This is evident

because P1, during the interviews, alluded that she conducted searches on the internet for activities that can assist to improve interaction among learners; for example she used the relevant and appropriate knowledge from reliable sources to develop learners' reading proficiency via scaffolding.

When participants engage learners interactively in reading activities such as reading aloud, reading after the teacher, picture-talk, and reading independently, interest is maximally stimulated (Dryden & De Vos, cited in Mohangi, 2018). So, it is essential for teachers to use a wide range of reading activities to enhance the development of the five components of reading, or else children will not read for meaning (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016).

Participants also spoke about the challenges that they experienced in the teaching of reading. In the sections that follow, I discuss these challenges.

4.3 CHALLENGES IN THE TEACHING OF READING

According to Pretorius *et al.* (2016) most South African teachers in the Foundation Phase experience challenges in teaching reading. Factors that contribute to these challenges, according to Spaul, Pretorius and Mohohlwane (2020:11) are “reduced time on task, inadequate access to reading materials in African languages, and poor quality of early reading instruction in high-poverty contexts”. Emanating from the issue of challenges, six sub-themes were evident: parental involvement, overcrowded classrooms, language of learning and teaching (LoLT), resources, phonics and phonemic awareness, and memorisation.

4.3.1 Lack of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is now being acknowledged and encouraged worldwide, as it supports positive reading development and positive educational outcomes (DeLoatche *et al.*, 2015). Ramabenyane (2012) attests that a lack of parental involvement, in context of developing reading skills among Black learners using African languages such as Sepedi, is a major problem. True to this notion, many of the participants in this study believe that a lack of parental involvement was one of the serious obstacles concerning teaching reading at the Foundation Phase level,

as parents are the immediate or first social beings with whom children interact. According to Silinskas and Kikas (2017:20), “Parental involvement contributes to children’s success and motivation in school subjects”. Participants in this regard expressed the following:

P2: Most children are not exposed to reading at home. Basic reading starts at home. Most learners only come into contact with reading at school - at home they don't get support. Most of their time is spent on seeing TV.

P6: The parents are not assisting the children at home, so children end up not doing their work at home.

P4: Some of the learners' parents are the “21st century group”. They use shorthand when writing, which makes it difficult for parents to encourage their children to read.

The three participants’ responses indicated the extent of teachers’ challenges when teaching reading due to a lack of parental involvement. By implication, these participants would love to see parents at home reading storybooks and encouraging their children to read books daily since parents are “the immediate system that learners will imitate or learn from through observation” (Moosa, 2018:47).

Research studies indicate that, “a [harmonious] partnership with the school impacts positively on student achievement” (Coleman, 2013; Swart & Phasha 2016; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). Coleman (2013:51-53) emphasises that “parental partnership does not only have a positive impact on the learners’ achievement, it also affects learners’ reading skills. Cilliers, cited in Eloff and Swart (2018), assert that criticism and judgemental attitudes from teachers towards parents can destroy the partnership. This is not happening in South Africa because “parents are correctly classified as working-class as they are very busy trying to make ends meet. The state takes their children off their hands for almost the entire day in a relatively safe environment [which] is undoubtedly beneficial and valuable for parents” (Westaway, cited in Moloji, 2019:5).

A study by Vygotsky (1978), who posits that learners actively construct knowledge by interacting with those in their immediate environment, hypothesised that the community is a significant contributor in the process of learners' making sense of their environment. Those in their environment could be parents, siblings, peers, and teachers. Consequently, as P2 and P6 alluded in their responses, a healthy partnership between parents and teachers would help both parties to be better equipped in teaching reading and encourage the learners to be positively involved in their reading lessons in the Foundation Phase. The discussion below is on the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) which is also a challenge in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase.

4.3.2 Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT)

In answering the interview question concerning challenges, the participants indicated LoLT as being part of their challenge in teaching reading, and they responded in the following manner:

P2: Transition from Home Language to English First Additional Language (EFAL) harms teaching reading.

P6: Presently learners are learning two languages at the same time, which is confusing and problematic.

The two participants' responses, P1 and P6, indicated the two languages (Sepedi HL and English FAL) used in the Foundation Phase as posing a challenge when teaching reading. Since the teaching of these two languages is a challenge, they have a negative impact on the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase. The teachers have to teach both languages. Since Sepedi is the LoLT and English is FAL, the participants found it problematic and confusing because they cannot teach both languages at the same time. The participants found it difficult to teach all subjects in Sepedi, but this was compounded by the fact that when they teach EFAL as a subject, they switch to Sepedi.

According to participants, if a learner struggled or was confused with the LoLT, it was difficult for such a learner to understand EFAL. The teachers' confusion and

problems in teaching the two languages would, in turn, impact negatively on their teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase. Omodire (2015) believes that if a learner is not conversant with the LoLT, then it is difficult for the teacher to achieve the set goals. In this case, the set goal is learners' ability to read. The reasoning of Omodire (2015) differs from Zergani (2016) and Foley (2017) who believe that HL teaching in the Foundation Phase equips learners with skills to learn the second language (EFAL) more easily. This is contrary to P2's and P6's views because they both believed that the teaching of the two languages harmed their teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase classes.

However, P2 and P5's opinion, in this regard, is backed up by the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 section D (1) (NEPA, 1996). This policy states that all Grade 1 and 2 learners should use one approved language. Presently Grade 1 and Grade 2 learners learn both languages. All these anomalies make it difficult for teachers who teach reading effectively in the Foundation Phase. Since Vygotsky (1978) focuses on social learning, learners learn through interaction with those around them (teachers and family); the implication is that the language of learning should be the learners' home language as this will make learners learn more easily. The parents and teachers, as MKOs, should guide the learners through mediation to learn the two languages, therefore it is important for parents to interact more with teachers. The discussion below is on overcrowded classrooms being a serious challenge in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase.

4.3.3 Overcrowded Classrooms

In answering the interview question concerning challenges, the participants indicated the aspect of overcrowded classrooms. They responded as follows:

P2: Overcrowded classrooms harm teaching reading. During reading, I need to group learners into manageable groups. In teaching guided reading, I have to teach for thirty minutes daily. Give two groups fifteen minutes each. The larger group extends the group guided reading time.

P3: We have overcrowding; it is not easy to teach reading with lots of learners in the class.

P4: Teaching the whole group to read denies me the opportunity to identify learners who cannot read.

P5: Our classrooms are overcrowded and we cannot move around freely in the classroom. It is difficult to present group-guided-reading.

The participants emphasised that overcrowding produces challenges that they experience when teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classrooms. Ntsala (2019) emphasises that overcrowded classrooms deny each learner the opportunity to interact with the teacher productively as the teaching of reading requires giving special attention to individual learners (DoE, CAPS, 2011).

Some studies confirm these participants' claims that due to overcrowding, teachers find it challenging to pay individual attention to each learner and to implement different teaching activities in each classroom (Beukes et al., 2010; Groundene & Widsmith-Cromarty, 2006). Similarly, Mohangi (2018) and Ntsala (2019) confirm that South African classrooms have more than 40 learners per class and this proves to be difficult for teachers to pay attention to individual interests and abilities of learners.

Constructivist theorists, like Bruner (1983) view the child as an active explorer and strategist. In an overcrowded classroom, this theory will seldom reach its intended goal, as argued by Mohangi (2018), Marais (2016), Ntsala (2019) and Caddy (2015), who believe that teachers in overcrowded classrooms disadvantage teachers and learners alike.

The teachers in South Africa will continue to teach in overcrowded classrooms until such time the DBE comes up with concerted efforts, strategies, and resolutions to overcome this challenge. The Minister of Basic Education (DoE, 2012), recommended the maximum teacher-learner ratio for South African primary schools to be 40:1. However, this ratio is still not conducive for teaching reading. The

discussion below is on resources as a challenge in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. Unless, the Department of Basic Education adopt the Netherlands and England's strategy in line with the discussion on retired teachers as volunteers in chapter 2 (2.5.2) to alleviate the overcrowding,

4.3.4 Resources

Howie *et al.* (2017:11) maintain that only fifty per cent (50%) of the South African schools have adequate resources in terms of instructional materials. The lack of resources impact on the quality of learning negatively. In answering the interview question concerning challenges, the participants indicated the lack of resources as another serious challenge in teaching reading. The participants responded in the following manner:

P2: There is a shortage of provincial infrastructure and resources, which is outside my control.

P3: I don't have a floor mat in my class where learners could sit during group-guided reading. I cannot put learners on the cold floor.

P5: There is a lack of reading materials; we only have small picture books and small storybooks with small captions.

The lack of resources led to challenges that teachers experienced when teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. According to the participants, the lack of resources has a negative impact on teaching of reading. As indicated by P5, there is a lack of reading materials like readers, floor mats and classrooms create challenges for teachers when teaching reading. These resources are basic requirements for teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classroom.

The lack of reading books mentioned by P5 (above) is concerning, as highlighted by various studies (Howie *et al.*, 2011) since it hindered the development of reading skills which is a setback towards maintaining sustainable learning environments (Du Plessis, 2019; & Ramabenyane, 2012).

In sum, teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase continues to be negatively impacted by a lack of resources. Even though other studies (Eady & Lockyer 2013; Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018) recommend the use of the internet to download the teaching of reading resources; however, there are fewer opportunities to access Sepedi internet sources. The discussion below is on phonics and phonemic awareness as a challenge in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase.

4.3.5 Phonics and Phonemic Awareness

In facilitating the development of phonemic awareness, the Foundation Phase teachers help learners to realise that “words have meaning when the phonemes are combined in a particular order and that they match the sounds to the letters and letter patterns”. It forms a strong foundation to develop learners “to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds”, as poor development of phonemic awareness leads to reading difficulties (Ramabenyane, 2012:35). According to Wang (2017), the strategy of using phonics is to teach learners the most common sound-spelling relationships so that they can decode, or sound out words. Some participants, namely P3, stated that learners had difficulty in acquiring skills relating to phonics and phonemic awareness. The participants responded in the following manner:

P3: I discovered that learners have insufficient knowledge of phonemic awareness. Learners have the challenge of decoding and sounding out words.

P4: Most children are usually taught to spell instead of teaching them to sound words.

P6: Learners have the confusion of sound (-b-) and (-d-). Some learners don't understand sounding. Learners find it difficult to read syllables. For an example $b + a = ba$. Learners will read b/a not ba . They isolate sounds instead of blending them

The effect of challenges in phonics and phonemic awareness stifles the reading learning process. However, Rule (2017) discounts this view and says that the chanting of phonics with its focus on oracy shows that little emphasis is on

comprehension and making meaning of the written words. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2016) results show that the oratorical reading approach is evident. This test showed that 78% of Grade 4s could not read for meaning in the languages they were taught from Grades 1-3; presumably because the focus is on oracy and not meaning making.

Furthermore, P4 stated that teachers teach learners spelling and not sounds. By implication, spelling means representing language in writing by using phonemes (Burns, 2006). For example, words like *leswielo* (broom) and *meropa* (drums), whereas sounding is about sounds that make up a word. Presumably, P5 understands that words are made up of phonemes which represent particular sounds; and hearing the different sounds that make up a word including blending sounds to hear and read words is part of the reading and meaning-making processes (Nixon, 2019). A child might know sounds and encode and decode, but that does not mean that the child has developed phonemic and phonological awareness.

Noting the participants' responses, it was evident that teaching phonics and phonemic awareness is essential in addressing the challenges of teaching reading effectively in Foundation Phase classrooms. Accordingly, Shibambu (2017) asserts that the art of teaching reading effectively to the Foundation Phase learners requires a high degree of professional competence.

Additionally, the study by De Vos, Van der Merwe and Van der Mescht (2014) indicates that because learners are not actively taught to use a combination of letters (graphemes) and speech sounds (phonemes) as a strategy, this thus takes them time to develop phonemic awareness. The CAPS (DoE, 2011) and DBE (2008) concur with the finding of De Vos *et al.* (2014) concerning the teaching of reading using graphemes and phonemes, as it recommends the word-attack-skill strategy used by teachers to equip learners with the necessary skills when they encounter difficult words during reading. However, Shibambu (2017) believes that teaching decoding and the blending of words simultaneously may be confusing to learners.

Further, P3 indicated that learners have insufficient knowledge of phonemic awareness, and thus have challenges of decoding and sounding out words. Also, P4 indicated that most learners are usually taught to spell instead of teaching them to sound words; and P6 alluded that learners are confused regarding sounds like [b] and [d]. It is evident that learners do not understand sounding, and find it challenging to read syllables like /ba/ and /di/ in the following words *bapala* (play) and *dula* (sit). They isolate sounds instead of blending them. According to DBE (2011), the purpose of phonics instruction is to give the learners tools for decoding words. They must use the word-attack method when encountering unfamiliar words, as it involves basic skills to promote reading and writing.

The teachers in their teaching of phonics, model how to segment and sound words by decoding and blending them. When interacting with learners during reading lessons, the teacher will ask them to sound and segment as to cement understanding (scaffolding) of the text. The teachers will ask learners to listen to rhymes, and to distinguish the sound repeated in such rhymes. For example, */bana ba bona/* (their children), and *bona ya bona/* (that belongs to them), where sound [b] is repeated.

In line with the discussion on phonics and phonemic awareness in chapter 2 (2.5.2). Consequently, it is evident that phonemic awareness and phonics help learners acquire the skills for reading. Assuming, that teachers have the necessary competency to facilitate the process. However, Blunden-Groef (cited in Caddy, 2015) argues that too much focus on the phonic method can hamper comprehension and fluency reading. The discussion below is on memorisation as a challenge in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase.

4.3.6 Memorisation

In answering the interview question concerning the challenges of reading, the participants also indicated memorisation as an issue. They responded as follows:

P1: In other cases, one finds that children memorise the text and read without comprehension. Children are not reading at home and only experience reading at school.

P3: Learners are reading without understanding.

P5: Learners can make sense of print, but cannot pronounce the words.

According to the teachers, it was evident that memorisation was emphasised rather than creativity, enjoyment, and insight into the text read by learners. Moreover, what the learners had memorised was quickly forgotten as they became passive listeners (Mouziraji & Mouziraji, 2015). I agree with the latter because it reflects how the participants learned during teacher-centred lessons. Besides, they did not have opportunities to read and to attach meaning to the text.

Memorisation, as implied by the participants, could be linked to overcrowding, lack of resources, and teachers' incompetency in teaching reading. Teachers in their responses indicated how during their early reading years used memorisation as a technique because they never had books, and the teachers were the only ones having books. Nonetheless, memorisation has disadvantages and advantages. The advantage is that memorisation trains the brain "to develop learning and memory schemas that facilitate future learning" (Hoque, 2018:5). The disadvantage of memorisation is that it denies the learners a deeper understanding of content, and it does not link the new knowledge to prior knowledge. Against this backdrop, it is evident that memorisation and understanding complement each other, although participants' responses indicated the two as being opposites as they believed that memorisation hampers understanding. The guided reading lesson observed, attest to memorisation as the learners were more involved with memorisation than constructing meaning to text,

4.4 TEACHERS' RESPONSIVENESS TO CHALLENGES

The teachers' responsive to challenges according to studies is significant because classroom interaction, motivation and objectives are under the teacher's control as

the teacher chooses different approaches to focus on the learners' reading needs (Ourania 2016). The participants' responsiveness to challenges in teaching reading, resulted in several sub-themes as indicated in Table 4.1.

Some of the challenges like overcrowding which leads to over-emphasising memorisation (among other problems) will continue to be experienced by teachers in teaching reading, and they will remain unless the DBE comes up with strategies to minimise them (Muthusamy, 2015). The teachers in the study responded to the challenges in different ways such as using group work, illustrations, and games to enhance phonics and phonemic awareness.

4.4.1 Differentiated Learning

Concerning the issue of overcrowding experienced by the teachers in the Foundation Phase, the following are some of the participants' responses:

P2: To solve overcrowding, I divide the learners into smaller groups when teaching in my classroom.

P6: To solve the issue of overcrowding, I divided my learners into groups even though it is time-consuming.

The responses of P2 and P6 showed how they tried to teach reading despite the challenges they encountered. Although it was clear that this temporary solution of using smaller groups would be advantageous to them and the learners, one disadvantage was that it was time-consuming. It also compromised curriculum-coverage as a new monitoring tool for reading development purposes.

In this regard, research conducted by Opoku-Asare, Agbenatoo and DeGraft-Johnson (cited in Marais, 2016) affirms that it will not be possible for teachers to use different methods, high-order questioning, and active learning approaches in overcrowded classroom - it is essential to assist learners individually to attach and construct meaning from the read text. According to Muthusamy (2015) and Ntsala (2019), overcrowding denied teachers opportunities to implement some of their

teaching strategies. This was identified during observations, because time constraints hampered the intended strategy.

The responses below are about using different illustrations and game-playing as another way to minimise or cope with challenges.

4.4.2 Use of Different Illustrations and Game-playing

Whilst Foundation Phase learners struggle to develop phonics and phonemic awareness, the teachers in the study attempted to facilitate the development of these skills by using different teaching methods:

P3: I start learners with the sounding of their names and move on to other additional words. I also encourage learners to listen to the sound that the word begins with.

P5: I play sound-games with the learners. I also do rhymes to assist them to be able to sound and to recognise words. I make sure that learners practise activities that develop phonemic awareness.

P6: I write words and the learners sound the syllables. I also use the p/d/b freeze meaning technique. I put it on the wall to remind them of the difference between sounding p/d/b.

The participants' responses indicated the importance of facilitating the development of phonics. As such, P5 indicated that she used sound-games and rhymes to help learners practise activities that develop phonemic awareness. According to a study in blending sounds instruction, "teachers may enhance pupils' phonics skills by listening to phonics songs that focus on teaching the sounds of the letters". (Nasrawi & Jamal, 2017:107).

Further, P6 indicated that the learners had challenges specific to the sounds /d/ and /b/. To solve the problem, she used the p/d/b freeze meaning technique. An example of a p/d/b freeze meaning technique is a poster used by the teacher (drawing a dummy picture) showing the difference in the sounds [p'], [d], and [b].

Studies revealed that objects could be drawn on the chalkboard or the flashcards as they can assist the learners in quickly understanding and realising the important aspects they have learned in the classroom (Alqahtani, 2015).

In teaching the learners phonemic awareness, P2 started by using the sounds contained in the learners' names, applying the inductive approach of moving from the known to the unknown, and the simple to the complex (Wong, Wang, Liang & Urtasun, 2019). In constructivism, the learners learn actively by engaging with activities that they know. They will also be able to understand what is constructed from the sounds of their names. Ball and Blachman (in cited in Nasrawi & Jamal, 2017) state that teachers "introduced useful activities for raising learners' phonemic awareness [such as] the name and sound of the letters [which] are presented".

Through these games, the learners can elicit meaning from constructive games and illustrations. Also, the learners would be able to interact with peers and teachers in a different context that would make mediation more fun (Vygotsky, 1978). The discussion below is about parental motivation, which is another strategy that participants will use to minimise their challenges.

4.4.3 Parental Motivation

The participants in the study tried to overcome the challenge of the lack of parental involvement by employing a number of strategies:

P1: I developed a whatsapp group that I use to communicate to parents and encourage them to assist their learners. I also make sure that I praise them for assisting their children.

P2: I encourage the parents to assist children with reading opportunities. I also motivate them to read stories to encourage their children to read.

P4: I motivate and encourage parents to read and to buy storybooks for their children. I give the learners the opportunity in class to retell the stories they read with their parents to other learners.

Parental motivation towards learners was one fundamental factor that participants intended to exploit in assisting in the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase. Studies by Swart and Pettipher (2016) and Coleman (2013) acknowledge the importance of regular communication with parents, was to encourage them to be involved in assisting their children. To involve parents actively in their children's learning, they need to be given activities that will engage with at home. Parental motivation is an effective strategy that could be used productively by teachers because most parents want to help their children increase their level of reading performance (DBE, 2016).

Vygotsky (1978) stated that parent-child language interactions are critical for children to develop their thinking and language skills. Parents are closest to their children, and as agents of development, they can assist in language change by scaffolding their children's linguistic development towards co-constructing skills and internalising knowledge.

Successful parental involvement in the child's education implies active and ongoing participation of parents in the education of their children.

"When parents get involved in their children's education, then children are more likely to do better in school, be better behaved, have more positive attitudes towards school, and grow up to be more successful in life" (DBE, 2016).

The discussion below is about inculcating a love for reading as another strategy to minimise reading challenges.

4.4.4 Love for Reading

Even though participants experienced challenges when teaching reading, they still expressed positivity. They instilled the love for reading in their different classes. This was evident from their responses below:

P1: I allow my learners who complete the given tasks to go to the reading corner and read the storybooks of their choice.

P2: By encouraging them, I will be allowing them to create stories from pictures, if they cannot read.

P3: My role as the teacher is to help the learners to love reading, to be better people in the future, and to be able to read with understanding. I make sure that I read aloud to the learners.

P4: Most of my learners wait for their sisters after school, and I allow them to use the reading corner to read the vocabulary posters on the wall.

P6: I tell the learners stories. I also give them books to read at home.

The response from all participants indicated their enthusiasm, their responsible attitude, and loyalty as teachers. Studies revealed that primary school teachers are professionals who are profoundly involved in developing literacy skills in their learners (Spaull, 2017). Here, P3 felt it was her priority to help the learners to love reading, which will benefit them in the future.

Purcell (2018) maintains that storytelling develops learners' cognitive thinking. Moreover, P2 and P6 instilled the love for reading by continually reading stories to the learners. Also, P1 and P4 encouraged learners to read the stories and vocabulary on the wall, thus inculcating a love for reading. I also read stories to my Grade 1's, and my learners enjoyed listening to stories to the extent that they always reminded me to read stories to them. That is why they read pictures more rapidly than text.

When the teachers read stories aloud, they modelled reading to the learners. The learners, in turn, imitated what they learned through interaction with their teachers. Davis (2016) and Joubert et al. (2013) confirm that reading to the children daily and buying the correct level reading books instils the love for reading and consequently equip them with reading skills.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I presented teachers' experiences of teaching reading to answer my research question: *What are teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase*. The analysis from the semi-structured interviews revealed four themes: understanding reading, teaching reading, challenges, and teachers' responsiveness to challenges.

The teachers' conceptualisation of reading was influenced by their beliefs, childhood memories and teacher-training. Teaching reading revealed different reading methodologies, resources, modelling reading behaviour, and reading activities. Factors like lack of parental involvement, the language of learning and teaching, overcrowded classrooms, resources, and memorisation, emerged. The discussion also addressed the participants' responsiveness to the challenges they experienced in order to alleviate them. They circumvented the problem by dividing learners into smaller groups, using different illustrations and game-playing situations, parental motivation, and instilling a love for reading. The next chapter (5) focuses on classroom observation on how teachers teach reading at Foundation Phase.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter (4) discussed the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of data generated from interviews, which involved six participants responding to the sub-research question: *How do teachers teach reading?* This chapter presents the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of data generated from observations of lesson presentations on how participants teach reading.

The six participants presented the different lessons on how to teach reading using mainly Shared Reading and Guided Reading methodologies. The teachers' responses during the interviews in terms of how they understood the concept *reading*, as they have alluded to in chapter four (4.4.2), also revealed that through in-service training in the form of workshops provided by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), they acquired the necessary skills for teaching reading using the two methodologies. As a result, these teachers felt more confident to use Shared Reading and Group Guided Reading in presenting their reading lessons. The following two lessons are representations of the ways in which the six participants used Shared Reading and Guided Reading to develop learners' reading skills.

In the next section, I reveal how the two Grade 1 participants taught reading in their classrooms.

5.2 TEACHING READING

This section presents how two teachers presented their lessons using different reading methods.

5.2.1 The Shared Reading Lesson

A traditional South African story *Sehlola wa Kubu* (Sehlola the Hippo) was chosen by P1. This participatory story had many repetitive actions and verbal patterns. It was a short, simple story with delightful and real-life illustrations and could be classified as falling within a

narrative genre. The CAPS (2011) expects learners in the Foundation Phase to be able to read fiction as well as non-fiction texts. At the end of the story, the teacher talked about the moral of the story, which encouraged learners to be considerate to others.

In this lesson, P1 had the entire class of learners seated on the floor, and she stood in front of the learners (figure 5.1. below).



Figure 5.1: Presentation of a lesson on Shared Reading at School A.

She used facial expressions and indicated the shifts in the different roles of the animals in the stories, making the story very exciting. Learners participated in the shared reading experience as indicated below:

P1: *Lehono, re tlo bala puku ye* (We are reading this book today) [showing the learners the cover page of the book]. Figure 5.2 below shows the story on which the teacher based the lesson.



Figure 5.2: The “big book” sample pages

After a brief introduction, the teacher placed the big book on the aisle and sat on a small chair. The teacher continued asking the learners about the cover page of the big book. Below are the questions that the teacher asked based on the cover page.

P1: *Ke mang a ka re balelang hlogo ya puku ye?* (Who can read the title of this book?)

Thabo: *Sehlola wa Kubu* (Sehlola the Hippo).

P1: *Kgonene, Thabo. Kamoka, ga re baleng hlogo ya puku ye* (Well done, Thabo. Let us all read the title of the book).

Lerato and Mpho: *Sehlola wa Kubu* (Sehlola the Hippo).

P1: *Mongwadi wa puku yeke mang?* (Who is the author of this book?)

Koketso and Mpho: *Mongwadi ke Lali* (The author is Lali).

P1: *Ke mang mogatši wa puku ye?* (Who is the publisher of the book?)

Thapelo: *Ke ba ga Lectio publishers* (Lectio-publishers).

P1: *Le bona eng mo seswantšhong se?* (What do you see in this picture?)

Mpho: *Ke bona kubu.* (I see a Hippo.)

Tebogo: *Ke bona nonyana e dutse mohlareng* (I see a bird sitting on the tree).

Lerato and Mosima: *Re bona nonyana e dutse godimo ga kubu* (We see the bird sitting on top of the Hippo).

P1: *Ka mo letlakaleng la ka morago le bona eng?* (What do you see on the last cover page?)

Tumelo: *Ke bona dinonyana tša go fapana ka mebala* (I see birds with different colours).

Lerato: *Nna ke bona serurubele* (I see a butterfly)

P1: *Kgonene! Mebala ya dinonyana ke e me bjang?* (Well done! What are the colours on the birds?)

Thapelo: *Nonyana e na le mmala wa namune le mafego a matsoto* (The bird is orange and brown in colour).

P1: *Le nagana gore puku ye e tlo re botša ka eng?* (What do you think the story is about?)

A group of learners: *E tlo re botša ka Kubu le dinonyana* (The story is about the Hippo and the birds).

5.2.1.1 Synthesis of the Shared Reading lesson

The book's font and the pictures were large, colourful, and visible to all learners. Before reading the big book, P1 reminded the learners to answer the questions in full and clap their hands when they heard or saw the word with the phoneme /hl/.

The teacher used a ruler as a pointer. She read the book alone, using different “voices” where necessary, while the learners listened. The learners had to listen to identify the phoneme /hl/. The learners identified the phoneme /hl/ in *Sehlola* (the name of the hippo), *hlodumela* (peep), and *sefahlego* (face). The teacher asked questions based on the story and the learners responded. The learners had to look at the pictures and predict what the story is about. It was evident that P1 asked the questions to facilitate different reading skills such as prediction, judgements, and critical thinking. She asked the learners leading questions to prompt the learners' thinking skills and to assess their comprehension. After reading the whole story, she thereafter asked the learners to join her in reading the text.

P1: *Sehlola ke kubu ya go dula ele jwang?* (What is Sehlola's character?)

Mpho: *Sehlola ke kubu ya go dula e thabile* (Sehlola is a joyful animal).

P1: *Ke eng se Sehlola a beng a se rata?* (What is it that Sehlola likes?)

Thato and Manana: [simultaneously] *Sehlola o be a rata go rutha ka meetseng ge go fiša* (Sehlola likes to swim when it is hot).

P1: *Lena ge go fiša le rata go dira eng?* (What do you like to do when it is hot?)

Mosima: *Nna ke rata go opela* (I like to sing) [Other learners said various things that they like doing].

P1: *Ke ka baka la eng Sehlola a sega?* (Why was Sehlola laughing?)

Mosina and Mpho: *Ka gore o tshošitše dinonyana di sa iketlile* (Because he frightened the birds while relaxing).

P1: *Naa dinonyana di ile tša re eng ge Sehlola a etla go tsona?* (What did the birds say to Sehlola when he came over to them?)

Learners: *Di ile tša re “Sehlola wa tla wa re tshoša!* (They said: you frightened us Sehlola).

P1: *O be o tla ikwa jwang, ge e be e le wena dinonyana tše?* (How would you feel if you were these birds?)

Kabelo: *Nna be ke tlo fofa.* (I would fly away)

These open-ended questions developed the learners' reasoning, knowledge, and thinking skills (Walsh & Hodge, 2018). The teacher paused at regular intervals, asking questions to determine how learners reasoned and to check whether they understood the vocabulary that they encountered in the story. The teacher's initial questions aroused learners' interest in the story and promoted discussion. As the lesson advanced, she asked more higher-order questions, compelling learners to offer opinions and to allow learners to reflect on the story using personal experiences; for example: how would you feel if you were these birds?

During the interactive phase of the lesson, P1 explained the meaning and context of difficult words in the story. She had written those problematic words on the flashcards before the lesson presentation. She allowed learners to read the new words on the flashcards and then pasted the words onto the chalkboard. Figure 5.3 below shows examples of flashcards with new words; namely, *hlodumela* (peep), *rutha* (swim), *thokong* (that side), and *serapeng* (zoological garden).

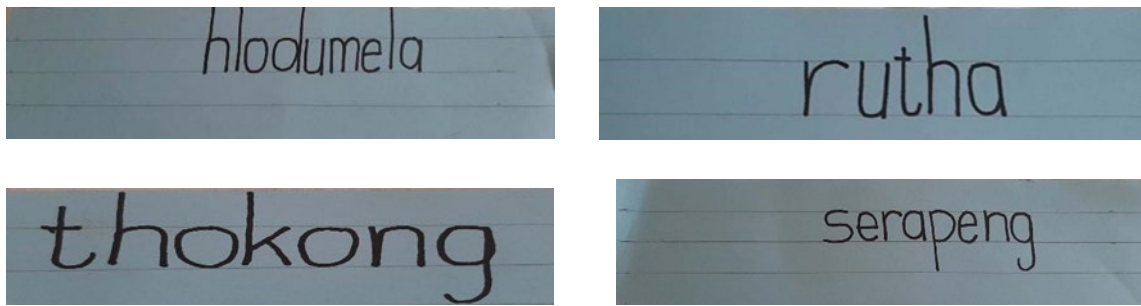


Figure 5.3: Flashcards of difficult words

The teacher asked the learners to construct their own sentences using the new vocabulary.

Examples:

Mošemane o hlodumela mosetsana a robetše (The boy peeps at the sleeping girl) *Bana ba a rutha* (The children are swimming).

Then the teacher praised learners for their responses and asked them to go back to their seats.

5.2.1.2 Discussion on Lesson 1

Notably, P1's lesson presentation of Shared Reading aligned well with the guidelines suggested in chapter two, and those of the (DBE, 2008). In using Shared Reading, the teacher's interactive presentation encouraged the learners to answer the questions correctly. In asking the learners relevant questions, the teacher stimulated learners' thinking and comprehension, and promoted meaning-making of the text. The teacher's presentation reflected some of the key aspects of Social Constructivism such as interaction, collaboration, and cognitive development. Tudge and Winterhoff (cited in Sills & Rowse, 2016) attest that incorporation and collaboration engender verbal reasoning and discussion with another individual who is knowledgeable, with the aim of reaching a shared understanding while developing children's cognition.

To some extent, it was evident from classroom observation that P1 understood and applied Shared Reading principles as she incorporated techniques such as prediction, reading aloud, and re-reading (DBE, 2008). Further, P1 engaged the learners in a discussion centred on the cover page of the book. She and the learners discussed pictures on the cover page,

and later, they would discuss every page of the book. They also discussed the author and the blurb of the story (CAPS, 2011).

However, despite using flash cards to develop learners' vocabulary, she (P1) explained the difficult words herself instead of providing learners with contextual clues to decipher the meaning of the difficult words. This is an indication that P1's approach is still teacher-centred; a clear contradiction of the Social Constructivist theory, which emphasises learner-centredness. In fact, P1 could have used the "five finger" strategy (DBE, 2008). The first finger requires the reader to look at the pictures and heading for clues to pronounce the "unfamiliar" word. The second finger requires the learners to recognise some part of the word. The third finger requires the reader to sound the word. The little finger requires the learner to ask the teacher what the word means (chapter 2:2.9). By following these steps to the end of the sentence, they would be able to grasp the contextual clues, and then be able to read the "unfamiliar" word (DBE, 2008).

On a positive note, P1's presentation enabled learners to link their prior knowledge with new knowledge. In this lesson, the learners were able to identify the words with the /hl/ sound, which they learnt in the previous lesson. Using prior knowledge assisted learners to connect knowledge from the known to the unknown. According to Right, (2018), repetition as a means of linking the unknown with the known, helps learners to explore knowledge independently.

(i) *Developing reading skills*

Following on the discussion of the five components of reading as discussed in chapter two (which included phonemic awareness, word recognition, phonics, sight words, developing comprehension skills and vocabulary development), some of these aspects came into play during the presentation of this lesson as P1's lesson revealed a variety of reading activities to promote reading skills. Significantly, P1 assisted the learners to develop *word recognition* by asking them to clap hands when they heard or saw the word with the phoneme /hl/. This technique encouraged learners to focus pointedly to identify such words. The learners developed *phonemic awareness* as they began to associate the sound [ɸ] with the phoneme /hl/. In identifying words with the phoneme /hl/, the learners increased their *vocabulary* and their understanding of the text. Studies by Sidhu and Pexman (2017:7) revealed that "sound symbolism is relevant to our understanding of the fundamental nature of spoken language, [specifically] to the relationship between the form of the word and its meaning".

When learners identified the phoneme /h/ from the words shown on the flash cards, they were linking their new content to existing knowledge. Hardman (2014) confirms that connecting the known to the unknown is an effective strategy for mediation. The Social Constructivist theory of Vygotsky (1978) espouses that, teachers as MKOs, must use clues that will lead the learners to make-meaning of a particular knowledge area in teaching reading. This technique assisted the learners to revise what they previously learnt and eventually to attach new meanings to the content.

The questioning technique of P1 helped learners to acquire skills to construct meaning from text. This technique where the teacher mainly asked questions and the learners responded, enabled P1 to identify learners who were successful in acquiring the intended reading skills, and those were not. In asking questions, the teacher facilitated the process of learners relating to the text. Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theory of teaching reading emphasises the interactive role of learners in developing understanding and making sense of the text (*comprehension*). Hence, asking questions, providing clues to understand difficult words, and allowing learners to construct sentences from new words, is evidence of how the teacher used the principle of ZPD to close the gap in learners' knowledge.

Additionally, in the process of developing the learners' reading skills, P1 demonstrated how model-reading (aloud) a text assisted to identify the phoneme /h/. Reading aloud and letting the learners read after her (P1), develops *word recognition* skills. Learners also developed comprehension skills when the teacher assisted them to link their prior knowledge by asking questions and reading aloud. The teacher developed the vocabulary acquisition component by explaining the meanings of new words from the text, which were pre-written on the flashcards. The learners read the words on flashcards and then attempted to construct sentences. The learners gradually became fluent readers as they re-read the text with their teacher (DBE, 2008).

(i) *Using reading materials to support reading development*

From classroom observations, it was evident that P1 varied reading materials to stimulate learners' interests in creative ways. During Shared Reading, P1 used the colourful big book, with large font, and large visible pictures for the whole group to see. She placed the big book on the aisle and used a ruler as a pointer due to the lack of real pointers. The use of relevant

materials such as flash cards, pictures, and the big book indicated that P1 was conversant with the Shared Reading methodology as recommended the DBE (2008).

(ii) *Modelling reading*

“Modelling reading” (discussed in section 4.2.5) was utilised by P1 during Shared Reading. During the lesson, the teacher read the text alone while the learners listened. The teacher modelled reading by discussing the cover page of the book and allowing the children to predict the contents. She did this to determine what the children already knew. She also demonstrated to the learners how the relationship between the spoken words and letters added meaning to their reading of texts. In modelling reading, P1 showed learners how to read expressively by reading from left to write in preparation for independent reading (DoE, CAPS, 2011).

The modelling activity provided the learners with opportunities to imitate their teacher. This concurs with what the participants alluded to during the interviews when they highlighted their use of modelling as a strategy that assisted learners in mastering reading, sounding, and pronouncing words correctly. Hill (cited in Moosa, 2018) justifies teacher-demonstration as an effective and meaningful strategy of teaching reading. Below is the group guided lesson presentation.

5.2.2 Group Guided Reading Lesson

Participant 5 introduced her lesson with a song;

Ditlha tša ngwaga di a dikologa, dikologa, dikologa,

Ditlha tša ngwaga di a dikologa, ngwaga ka moka.

(The seasons of the year go round and round, round and round, round and round,
the seasons of the year go round and round, all year round).

This was sung to the tune of the wheel of a bus going round and round. The learners sang the song happily together with their teacher. After the song, she asked them about the weather conditions.

P5: *Lehono go sele bjang? (How is the weather today?)*

Learner: *Lehono go a fiša. (Today, it is hot).*

She gave the learners instructions concerning their tasks and behaviour. She asked the learners to write the phoneme /ts/, which was written on the chalkboard (figure 5.4 below). Also, P5 asked the learners to write their own words using the phoneme /ts/ as their independent activity. She further instructed the learners to work silently.

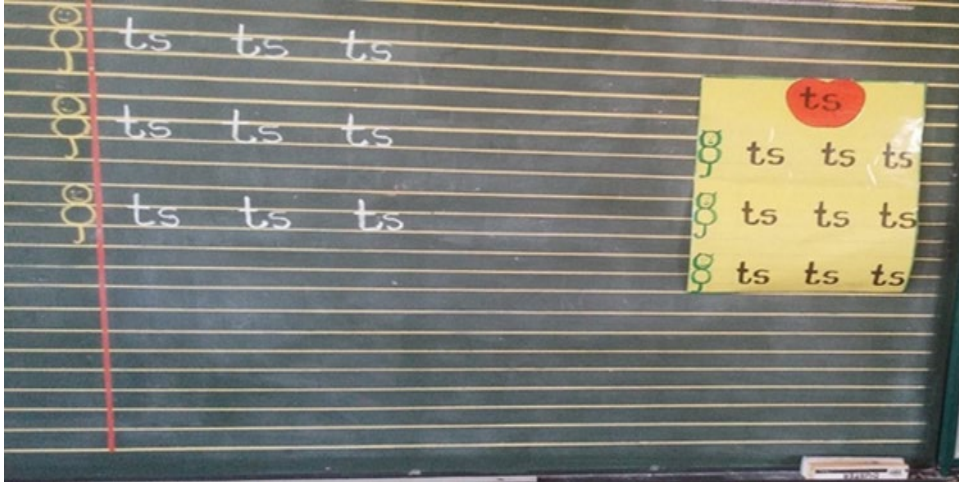


Figure 5.4: The phoneme /ts/ on the chalkboard

The other learners remained seated and engaged in independent activity using their exercise books (figure 5.5).



Figure 5.5: Learners working independently

She then called a group consisting of nine learners to the carpet area in front of the classroom next to the chalkboard.

Here, P5 presented group guided reading lessons using two groups of learners. In the first group, P5 used the A3 self-made board with sentences having the /ts/ phoneme, as indicated in figure 5.6 below. She gave the first learner a ruler to use when reading on the A3 board. She held the board for them to read. All the learners, in turns, used the same ruler to read; hence, learners in the group could see what the other learner was reading. The entire group read the same sentences written on the A3 board. After reading, P5 told learners to write their sentences with the phoneme /ts/ in their exercise books as part of their independent activity (figure 5.5). The first group went back to continue with their independent tasks.



Figure 5.6: Presentation of group guided reading lesson at School B

Thereafter, P5 instructed the second group of 12 learners to close their books and come to the carpet area where she gave them the A4 board with the phoneme /ts/ to read. The words on the A4 board were *tseba* (enter), *tseba* (know), *tsebe* (ear), and *katse* (cat) [figure 5.7 below]. Each learner read the four words on the board and passed them to the next learner, until all of them had read the four words. Next, P5 asked the second group to go back to their seats and continue with their independent tasks.



Figure 5.7: Words on an A4 board for guided reading.

5.2.2.1 Synthesis of the Guided Reading lesson

In this lesson, true to the main prescript of Guided Reading, which is to use small groups of learners, P5 had organised her learners into two different small groups. However, as the lesson progressed, it became evident that P5's lesson on Guided Reading drifted from the guidelines prescribed for teaching reading at Foundation Phase level. According to Guided Reading principles, P5 was supposed to stimulate the learners to talk, read and think their way through the text (DBE, 2008). However, she did neither of these activities. Unfortunately, P5's presentation was not interactive, as it was one-way directed. It is evident that her teaching was still teacher-centred and rooted in the Behaviourist Theory. She also used the "bottom-up" approach, which focused on objective observable behaviours (Lenjani, 2018) instead of having Social Constructivist characteristics as advocated by Vygotsky (1978).

Another requirement of Group Guided Reading is to group learners according to their reading abilities. In this way, the teacher allows learners to be equipped with the skills "to integrate learner's growing knowledge of convention of print, letter sound relationship and other foundational skills in context" (DBE, 2008). Contrary to this principle, P5 did not ask the learners any questions from the text as she merely allowed them to read the same sentences and words aloud one-by-one. Her lesson presentation encouraged memorisation and passive listening rather than assisting learners to develop reading skills and engage with text. As such, P5 did not provide ample opportunities for the development of comprehension skills.

5.2.2.2 Discussion on lesson

In analysing P5's lesson, it was evident that she was confusing Group Guided Reading methodology with a lesson on reinforcing phonics (DBE, 2008). In giving the learners the A3 and A4 boards, which introduced the phoneme /ts/, it was an indication that she was focusing on teaching phonemes. In her presentation, she did not engage the small groups of learners in constructive discussion about what they read; for example, the title of the book, content pages, sub-headings, blurb, pictures and make predictions about the story. This approach did not encourage learners' vocabulary acquisition, word recognition and higher-order thinking skills. In Guided Reading, the teacher needs to use readers or books, depending on the availability of resources, so that each learner in the group has access to a book (DoE, CAPS, 2011).

Further, P5 did not involve learners in building new vocabulary. She did not use the word-attack skill of the "five finger strategy" that the learners fall back on when encountering difficult words. In such a case, it was difficult for learners to link the new information with their own lived experiences, which implies that P5 failed to provide learners with opportunities to develop comprehension skills.

(i) Developing reading skills

Dryden and De Vos (cited in Mohangi, 2018) maintain that teachers can use learning activities in their classrooms to help develop different learning styles effectively and to stimulate learners' interest in improving their reading skills. As such, P5 attempted to use A3 and A4 boards in her presentation as this allowed the learners the opportunity to work independently while she was busy with other groups. Her purpose in allowing learners to work alone was to allow them to make their own choices. To some extent, P5 allowed the learners to develop the skill to read aloud the words written on the boards. Through this activity, she raised their awareness of word recognition. However, in the context of the Group Guided Reading principles, she did not follow this methodology (DBE, 2008), especially since the use of A3 and A4 boards failed to stimulate learners' reading interest.

(ii) Using reading materials to support reading development

Due to lack of small reading books, P5 used the A3 and A4 boards as improvisation in her Group Guided Reading lesson. Although the intention was noble, using these boards (inappropriately) did not allow the learners to integrate their growing knowledge of print, in relation to other contextual foundational skills. This led to there being no opportunities to

develop learners' word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension skills (DBE, 2008). In the context of using the Group Guided Reading, the A3 and A4 boards encourage memorisation, which can be an advantage and a disadvantage to the learners. It is contrary to the Social Constructivist theory of learning, but has the advantage of keeping the brain active, healthy and in shape because they can recall the words that they read to the teacher (Bresette, 2019). The disadvantage is that, memorisation encourages surface learning as learners do not effectively engage with the text (Abrihan, 2017).

(iii) Modelling reading

The teacher modelled reading by demonstrating to the learners that reading starts from left to right using a ruler as a pointer on the A3 board. She did not verbalise her modelling - she used actions. She only gave them the instruction to read. Duke and Pearson (cited in Young, 2017) indicate that the teacher's modelling of the target comprehension strategies, such as making inferences and predicting, are crucial in understanding text; but none of these were apparent in P5's lesson. The learners merely read the words on the A3 and A4 boards without engaging with the content. Hagaman, Casey and Reid (cited in Zarei & Roustai, 2019: 306) believe that, "modelling is based on strengthening the learners paraphrasing ability" and focuses "on training learners to become active readers through paying attention to the passage, breaking it down into smaller units". P5 was unable to demonstrate with her learners as she just encouraged them to read the words in a parrot-fashion). Moreover, there was no contextualisation of the words so that learners could break down the passage into smaller units.

According to Canine, Jitendra and Silbert (cited in Young, 2017: 1) modelling, as an important aspect in Group Guided Reading is "the primary means by which the teacher ensures that the learners can apply the concept for the strategies that are taught". Unfortunately, in P5's lesson, this did not happen. The notion of modelling as espoused by Jitendra and Silbert (2017) is congruent with the theory of Social Constructivism, which emphasises the need for collaborative and interactive learning. This should have occurred between P5 (as the MKO) and learners in the classroom by using real-life practical knowledge (Ardiansyah & Ujiharti, 2018).

5.3 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY PARTICIPANTS

The teachers who teach reading in the Foundation Phase classes experience challenges daily. The sub-themes emanating from the theme of challenges are lesson planning, resources, and time-constraints.

5.3.1 Lesson Planning

Lesson planning, as a sub-theme, emerged during observations of lesson presentations. I could not disregard the significance of lesson planning when I noted that none of the participants had their own lesson plans. All the participants were using the lesson plans from the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT). These NECT lesson plans, according to my experience as the Departmental Head, merely provide guidelines for teachers' lesson planning; and although they outline steps that teachers should follow when teaching reading, each teacher is expected to adapt them to his/her specific needs, as well as the unique situations in Foundation Phase classrooms.

My observations revealed that the teachers encounter challenges in understanding and using the NECT lesson plans. Only P1 understood the guidelines suggested in the NECT lesson plan as evidenced in the way she presented her lesson. Unfortunately, P5's poor lesson planning impacted negatively on her presentation; hence, she did not achieve her lesson objectives. Studies conducted by Stender, Bruckmann and Neumann (2017) confirm that a well-thought-out lesson plan results in sound teacher-learner interactions which lead to the achievement of the envisaged aims, something which did not happen with P5. On a positive note, P1 showed that she is knowledgeable about using the relevant methodology in teaching reading to the learners.

Guidelines (e.g. NECT) are available for the teachers to plan and adapt their lessons so that they can identify and understand the necessary steps required to plan a successful reading lesson. The discussion below centres on the lack of resources as a challenge in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase.

5.3.2 Resources

The participants' classrooms were print-rich, and according to Swanson (cited in Lentsch, 2018), learners in a print-rich environment are more likely to understand texts. Studies by Bradley *et al.* (cited in Ferna & Jiar, 2017) attest to the print-rich environment as it provides sufficient opportunities for multilingual language experiences to foster early literacy.

Resources like books, charts and flashcards would enhance learners' vocabulary acquisition and cognitive skills.

However, the lack of resources is a debilitating challenge in teaching reading in Foundation Phase classrooms. I noted that P1 and P5, who were from two different schools, failed to attain their set goals when teaching reading due to the lack of resources, contrary to their allusions during interviews. However, P6, in her lesson presentation on Shared Reading, used mini-storybooks, while P5 in her lesson presentation on Guided Reading used A3 and A4 boards as reading materials. The teachers lacked readers, "big books", pointers and mats. Hence, P5 used the A3 and A4 boards for improvisation, P1 used a ruler as a pointer, and P6 used the mini- storybook extracted from the DBE workbook for teaching Shared Reading. The other teachers lacked floor-mats, thus they adapted by allowing learners to remain at their desks during reading lessons.

Smith (2017) asserted that the lack of resources contributes highly to reading failure. Foorman, Herrera and Dombek (2018) agree that a lack of reading books hindered the development of reading skills in the Foundation Phase classroom. Due to large number of learners in classrooms, the lack of resources seriously affects the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase. Also, the lack of resources denies learners the opportunity to engage with different relevant texts. The discussion below is on time- constraints as a challenge in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase.

5.3.3 Time-constraints

The observation of the lesson presentations revealed that time-constraints were obstacles for teachers when teaching reading. However, the CAPS policy (DoE, 2011) stipulates time-frames for teaching reading for all Foundation Phase classes in South Africa. During lesson presentations, the teachers overstepped the recommended time-frames of teaching reading as indicated on their timetables. Even though the time for teaching in the Foundation Phase is flexible, it should not exceed the allocated time for other subjects, as other subjects' time will be compromised. Hoadley (cited in Naidoo, 2019: 6) indicated that:

The curriculum policy on pacing and hierarchical monitoring of enactment of pacing distract teachers from the pedagogical goals of supporting learning. The teachers in their lesson presentations must pace their lessons as required in the curriculum policy for curriculum coverage. Furthermore, teachers are focusing solely on keeping up with the prescribed pacing although they doubt that average and slower learners are learning at that pace.

The CAPS (2011) and NECT (2016) documents' guidelines allocated Shared Reading 15 minutes focus time in all Foundation Phase grades classes. In Grade 1 classrooms, lessons on Shared Reading must be presented three times per week. Each day is allocated a specific activity: Monday is for pre-read, Tuesday second read, and Wednesday is post-read.

All the participants exceeded their prescribed time of teaching aspects of reading, and that compromised attaining their objectives of the reading lesson. However, Gultig (2017) argued that time-on-activity is important, but not more important than teaching learners to achieve their learning goals as learning takes time, and prescribing time-frames does not imply that effectively learning will be successfully achieved.

5.4 SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS' READING CHALLENGES

During Shared Reading lesson presentations, participants asked learners questions in order identify those who struggled to understand the text. The participants called those learners by their names to encourage them to answer the questions. To develop "slow" learners' confidence, the participants advised other learners not to laugh at other learners when they answered questions incorrectly or took long to respond. Consequently, the learners responded positively to words of praise from their teachers such as "good attempt" (*o lekile/*), or "who can help him/her?" (*ke mang a ka mo thusang?*) In other lessons the teacher motivated learners to participate actively in the lessons by giving them stickers for their attempts.

Additionally, participants gave praises such as *kgonene!* (Well done!) when learners answered correctly. Some teachers asked learners to applaud those learners who answered the questions correctly. However, I did not observe instances where the participants identified learners with reading challenges who needed support. Following the Social Constructivist theory, P5's lesson on Group Guided Reading, revealed how teachers lack knowledge of this methodology in teaching learners reading in the Foundation Phase. Evidently, the teachers did not act as MKO, neither did they demonstrate the ability to mediate the appropriate structures and strategies of a particular knowledge-area (Teow, 2017). For example, P5 did not allow learners to read the title of the book, content pages, sub-headings, blurb, pictures, make predictions about the story, and increase their memorisation and vocabulary acquisition skills; thus she failed to effectively develop the learners' ability to read, decode and blend the story.

In summary, some of the participants classroom practises correlated with what they alluded during the interviews. In response to the research question, *how do teachers teach reading?* The three in the interviews mentioned reading methodologies that facilitate their teaching of reading. five participants acknowledged the importance of shared reading. In practice I observed participants teaching shared reading. in the presentation the teachers experienced common challenges of lack of resources. These challenges impact negatively on their teaching. These two data generating tools assisted me to get an in-depth understanding of what is happening in the different schools during teaching reading.

In answering the research question *what are the challenges that teachers experience when teaching reading?* The participants response and what I observed is similar. Overcrowding, lack of resources influenced the incompetency of teachers reading in the three different schools negatively. In my opinion teaching reading in the overcrowded classroom will seriously influence lack of resources, time constraints and incompetency in teachers.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter (5) discussed the themes that emerged from observation and analyses of data. It also entailed looking at teachers' lesson plans and evaluating them in terms of developing reading skills, use of reading materials to support development, and modelling. Moreover, challenges experienced during teaching reading based on poor lesson-planning, lack of resources, and time-constraints, were outlined, addressing support for learners' reading challenges, was included. Finally, the two sets of data generation showing similarities and differences were included. The next chapter (6) presents the summary, recommendations, and conclusions from the study's findings.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS, VALUE OF THE STUDY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter (5) discussed the themes and subthemes that emerged during classroom observation. In this chapter (6), Explanation of how the findings enhanced the theoretical understanding of the teachers' experiences in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. Firstly, I present the summary of the findings which are based on the research questions and themes supported by the literature review (chapter 2), the methodology and design of how the study unfolded (chapter 3), and the empirical study (chapters 4 and 5) underpinned by Vygotsky's (1978) theory of Social Constructivism. Secondly, I focus on the implications of the findings of the study. Thirdly, the value of the study is outlined. Fourthly, I provide the limitations and recommendations. Lastly, in my conclusion, I sum up all the discussions of the study.

6.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The reports from different studies revealed that South African learners in the Foundation Phase perform poorly in reading than those in other countries (SACMAQ 2001; PIRLS 2006; 2011; 2016). These reports were supported by Pretorius *et al.* (2016), who stated that most South African teachers in the Foundation Phase experience challenges in teaching reading. The learners' reading difficulties in Grade 2 led to investigating teachers' experiences when teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) reveal various underlying factors that contributed to learners' poor reading performance in the Foundation Phase.

The data generated from all six participants revealed teachers' understanding of teaching reading, the importance of teaching reading using the different reading methodologies, challenges encountered, and how they responded to such challenges when teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. The participants responded to all these aspects during the presentation of Shared Reading and Guided Reading lessons.

6.2.1 Teachers' Understanding of Reading

One of the findings about teachers' understanding of teaching reading is that it varied by their individual beliefs, as the participants explained their understanding of the skills of reading from different contexts. Even though the teachers want to develop the learners' reading skills and their ability to make sense of the text at an early age, there was disjuncture between their good intentions and their practice in the learning environments.

All the participants' narratives voiced in the interviews indicated that teachers' training and workshops developed and improved their teaching of reading. However, the participants' classroom observations revealed that their presentations were, to some extent, unable to practise what they alluded to during interviews, and that shows that they had not acquired the full sense of the theoretical and practical knowledge of teaching reading.

6.2.2 Teaching Reading

Allusions made by the participants revealed that teaching reading using different reading methodologies, postulated that learners learn by constructing meaning from text and through active involvement. The use of the shared and guided reading methodologies during the classroom observation indicated how some teachers struggle to apply the reading methodologies, as recommended in the CAPS (2011) policy due to the lack of resources and their impoverished teaching environment.

The teachers, as MKOs, struggled to use these methodologies implying that their teaching of reading is sometimes unsuccessful to equip learners with the skills to construct meaning from texts, as per Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivism theory, which is a primary method that will ensure that learners learn through interaction and collaboration. The different reading methodologies, as recommended by CAPS (2011), collaborate meaningfully with the Social Constructivism theory's objectives. Studies revealed that the use of these methodologies in teaching reading in the Foundation Phase requires teachers to possess sufficient relevant content knowledge concerning reading, in addition to sound pedagogical knowledge (Moats, cited in Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2018).

6.2.3 Challenges

The literature study revealed that many South African teachers in the Foundation Phase experience challenges in teaching reading (Pretorius *et al.*, 2016). This was evident in the participants' practices during my classroom observations.

Findings from interviews revealed a lack of reading materials as a challenge that hampers the teaching of reading. However, during the classroom observation, I was able to see how teachers improvised to teach reading. Smith (2017), Howie (2017) and Foorman (2018) highlight the negative effects of the lack of resources when teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. Reading materials are necessary for teaching reading effectively; the Social Constructivist theory emphasises the importance of learners' interaction with text to construct meaning to promote understanding. Eady and Lockyer (2013) and Raya and Nagasubramani (2018) suggest that to solve the problem concerning the lack of reading materials, the use of the internet to download reading resources, is highly recommended.

Literature also reveals that teachers working in overcrowded environments cannot attend to individual learner-interests and abilities (Caddy, 2015; Marais, 2016; Ntsala 2019). Despite the classroom overcrowding, teachers still persevered and acknowledged that learners need to be taught reading skills.

The Social Constructivist theory recommends applying the scaffolding and ZPD principles when teaching reading in overcrowded classrooms, especially when teachers cannot give each learner individual attention. As the MKOs, they will not be able to close the critical space that the child cannot understand when reading (ZPD). They will also not be able to mediate and guide the learners through the text and "leave" them when they have acquired the specific reading skill (scaffolding).

6.2.4 Teachers' Responsiveness to Challenges

Participants, during interviews, indicated that dividing learners into smaller group was a strategy to minimise challenges when teaching reading. During observations, I also recognised that this strategy allows teachers to give each learner attention; but this is time-consuming. Studies reveal that the stipulations of pacing in the curriculum and monitoring policies (DBE, CAPS, 2011) deny teachers opportunities to achieve their goals of teaching reading effectively. The fact that all the different reading methodologies are allocated a specific duration of time for lesson presentations as recommended by CAPS (2011) and NECT (2018), seems not to be enough because of overcrowding and lack of materials (among others).

During classroom observations, I recognised a lack of parental involvement because the teachers gave learners homework, but the learners did not complete the tasks. Findings also

reveal that stimulating parental motivation as a strategy minimises teachers' challenges. Literature also confirmed that parental motivation could be an effective strategy that teachers could use productively to overcome obstacles in the classroom (Silinskas & Kikas, 2017; Moosa, 2018).

6.2.5 Support for Learners' Challenges

Despite the challenges that learners encountered, the teachers were able to encourage them to answer questions through extrinsic motivation. Studies revealed that learners who are extrinsically motivated will continue to participate positively in class, even though they may not be rewarded for successfully completing such activities (Cherry & Morin, 2020). The lack of resources did not deter teachers' and learners' spirits. Teachers improvised to develop and instil a love for reading in learners who were motivated to construct meaning from text.

6.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The insight, findings, recommendations, and conclusions that emerged from this study, inform us about how to improve the teaching of reading in Foundation Phase classrooms. However, it is difficult to establish in the South African situation whether teachers follow the recommended CAPS (2011) requirements for teaching reading, unless one engages intensively with the teachers through interviews and classroom lesson observations. Literature based on Vygotsky's (1978) and Piaget's (1936) theories including CAPS (2011) guidelines, provided essential information on the principles and techniques of teaching reading. Zhu and Zhang (2016) point to the gap between theory and practice, which is justified by the classroom observation of lesson presentations in different schools. The recommendations below are geared for improving the teaching and learning of reading in all Foundation Phase classrooms in Limpopo.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Against the background provided in the sections above, I propose the following recommendations.

6.4.1 Teacher-training

Given that the study is qualitative, the findings cannot be generalised to all the schools in the Foundation Phase. However, the results of the study may affect and influence how teaching reading can improve. The recommendation for teacher-support was derived from teachers'

responses concerning the teacher-training sub-theme. The teachers' practice and theory do not correspond to the requirements for teaching reading. After every workshop and training session, DBE curriculum advisors (CA) need to give feedback and do follow-ups to determine whether the purpose of the training sessions and workshops were achieved. The CA also need to monitor and support teachers in the implementation of the learning strategies recommended for teaching reading.

The classroom observations and interviews revealed the importance of full-time specialisation in the teaching of Foundation Phase learners. My recommendation emanates from the differences in terms of depth and breadth of the lessons presented by the teachers who specialised in the Foundation Phase and those who attended a mere one- or two-days' workshops. Those teachers with full-time specialisation in the teaching of Foundation Phase learners, in contrast to those who only attended one or two days' workshops, presented lesson plans, which were in line with the teaching of reading requirements as stipulated in CAPS (2011) and NECT (2018:40-59) regarding their lesson plans and their core methodologies.

6.4.2 Overcrowded Classrooms

The recruitment of more qualified Foundation Phase teachers should be a priority because of the challenge of overcrowded classrooms. Having many learners in the classrooms make teachers fail to reach out to all learners during teaching and reading. During Group Guided reading lessons, learners need to be divided according to their abilities due to the large number, as teachers find it difficult to interact with the unmanageable number of learners to give individual attention as required by CAPS (2011). My contention is that as long as the teacher-learner ratio is high, teachers will remain forever faced with overcrowded classrooms that would impact negatively on teaching time as they find themselves exceeding the recommended time, and thus other subjects' time is compromised (Caddy, 2015; Marais, 2016; Ntsala, 2019).

One of the other factors that leads to overcrowding is the lack of classrooms. Learners are crammed in the classrooms because the school lacks space in terms of physical infrastructure (Ntsala, 2019). The DoE (2012) recommended a teacher-learner ratio of 40:1 in primary schools, but this is not possible because schools do not have the required number

of classrooms. This shortage forces teachers to work with large numbers of learners in their classes, thus negatively impacting their teaching of reading. The DBE needs to consider building enough classrooms to avoid having overcrowded classes, such as those sites where my study was conducted. Furthermore, they can adopt the England and Netherland strategy of using the retired teachers as volunteers to assist in this regard.

6.4.3 Resources

Reading materials are of paramount importance during the teaching of reading especially in Foundation Phase classrooms (Ramabenyane, 2012; 2013). The lack of reading materials hampers the teaching-learning processes; hence, schools must ensure that they are fully supplied with a variety of reading materials that suit the requirements of different reading methodologies. Studies by Smith (2017) and Du Plessis (2019) also reveal that the lack of reading materials negatively influences the teaching of reading. The Guided Reading methodology requires readers (reading texts) that will suit learners' various reading abilities. The Shared Reading methodology requires big colourful books with visible pictures and large font. Reading aloud requires engaging with storybooks. Accordingly, all methods of teaching reading require relevant and an adequate supply of reading materials.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to unforeseen circumstances, I had to reschedule interviews and classroom observation sessions. One participant scheduled for observation was absent. However, I managed to arrange a substitute participant who was ready to step in, so the process was not compromised. The second limitation of the study was the hiccup of keeping in regular contact with my supervisors at UFS as I am living in Limpopo Province, which is far from Bloemfontein.

6.6 VALUE OF THE STUDY

The study's primary purpose was to explore teachers' teaching reading experiences in Foundation Phase classes. Personally, the findings of this study presented a new perception of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. The study will further empower the Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE), Senior District Managers, curriculum advisors, circuit

managers, principals, teachers, and new researchers to refine and develop their educational reading practices, as well as combat challenges in Foundation Phase classrooms.

6.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings of the research study, which explored teachers' teaching reading experiences in Foundation Phase classrooms. This entailed the summary of the research findings, and teachers' understanding of teaching reading. The challenges, teachers' responses to the challenges, and support for learners' reading challenges, were also provided. Lastly, the chapter outlined the implications, recommendations, limitations, and the value of the study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Authorisation: Limpopo Department of Basic Education



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF **EDUCATION**

Ref: 2/2/2 Enq: MC Makola PhD Tel No: 015 290 9448 E-mail: MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za

Segooa MY
P O Box 143
Paledi
0892

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: **"EXPLORING TEACHERS EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE CLASSROOM"**.
3. The following conditions should be considered:
 - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
 - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the schools concerned.
 - 3.3 The conduct of research should not in anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
 - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.
 - 3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: SEGOOA MY

CONFIDENTIAL

Cnr. 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489, POLOKWANE, 0700
Tel: 015 290 7600, Fax: 015 297 6920/4220/4494

The heartland of southern Africa - development is about people!

Appendix B: Letters of Authorisation from three Circuit Offices



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

PRIVATE BAG X1108

SOVENGA

0727

TEL: 015 267 5641

FAX: 015 267 5248

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CAPRICORN DISTRICT
MANKWENG CIRCUIT

Enq: Kekana M.J
Tel No: 015 2675641

2018.08.14

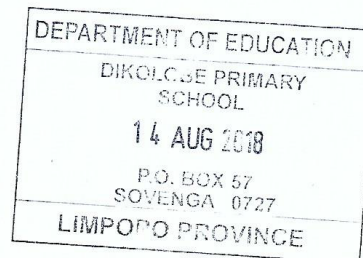
Ms. Segooa MY
143 Paledi
GaMothapo

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH BASED on "EXPERIENCES BY TEACHERS IN TEACHING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE CLASSROOM"

1. The above matter refers.
2. We acknowledged the receipt of your letter requesting to Conduct Research at Dikolobe Primary School.
3. The above mentioned research is accepted and permission is granted. This will assist our schools environment.
4. Wishing you all the best in conducting this research and the attainment of the qualification you hope to achieve.


.....
MAGAGANE M.D.
(CIRCUIT MANAGER)

14/08/18
.....
DATE





DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

POLOKWANE DISTRICT
KGAKOTLOU CIRCUIT

Enq: Rammala MF

Tel: 082 386 9542

Office: 079 209 5834

Email: kgakotloucircuitoffice@gmail.com

CONFIDENTIAL

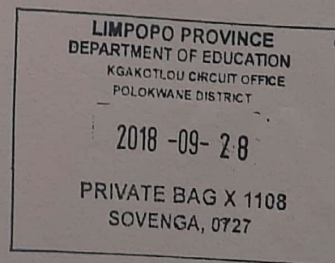
DATE: 28/09/2018

TO: ALL PRINCIPALS
OF PRIMARY WITH FOUNDATION PHASE
KGAKOTLOU CIRCUIT

REGARDING: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH BY SEGOOA MY

1. The above matter refers.
2. Kindly allow Ms. Segooa MY to conduct research at your school. . **TOPIC** "EXPLORING TEACHERS EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE CLASSROOM".
3. The research must be conducted in such a way that it enhance teaching and learning in schools.
4. In no way must the research compromise item 3 above.
5. Attached please find the approval from Head Office.
6. Thanking you in advance.

CIRCUIT MANAGER
KGAKOTLOU CIRCUIT





LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

PIETERSBURG CIRCUIT

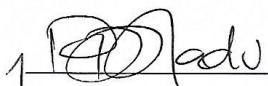
Enq: TLADI NP
Tel No: 015 290 9484/ 082 954 3476
Date: 14 August 2018

To: Principal
Florapark Comprehensive Primary School
Cnr Jasmyn and Van Marle Street
Florapark

Dear Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: SEGOOA MY

1. The above mentioned student attached to University of the Free State, has been granted permission to conduct research in schools in this District. Your school has been identified as one where she could conduct the research.
2. The student is encouraged to come to your school to make final arrangements with you. Ensure that this research does not disrupt teaching and learning in the school.
3. Attached kindly find the permission from Head of Department (signed on the 03/08/2018) and application letter from the student.
4. I hope and believe you will be of assistant to the researcher.



CIRCUIT MANAGER: RATALE SM

| |
|--|
| DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PIETERSBURG CIRCUIT MONITORING AND SUPPORT |
| DATE 01-08-2018 |
| CIRCUIT MANAGER |
| PRIVATE BAG 24009 GLENHOLDEN |

"We Belong, We Care, We Serve"

Appendix C: Permission letters to the Principals of schools

P. O BOX 143
PALEDI
0892
14 August 2018

The Principal

Tapola Primary School

0004

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR INSTITUTION.

I am a student at the University of Free-state, student number 2015259191, ethical clearance number UFS-HSD2017/0786, who is currently studying towards a Masters in Education. My topic is *exploring teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the foundation phase*. My research location is in the Kwena District. I request to be granted the opportunity to conduct interviews in your school as one of the chosen research sites. Interviews and recordings will be conducted with two foundation phase educators. Observation will be done with one grade 1 teacher only. The name of the school and participants will be anonymous and kept confidential. The participants will be given letters of consent to sign.

The study will be of benefit to Limpopo Department of Education who will possibly better understand the teachers' experience in teaching reading and its impact towards teaching reading in the foundation phase. Attached is ethical clearance approval and the letters of permission from Limpopo Department of Education and Potata Circuit Office, consent letters of participants.

Your assistance in this research project will be sincerely appreciated.

Yours faithfully

SIGN: *My Segooa*

Segooa M. Y. (Mrs)
(The researcher)

Appendix D: Participants' consent letters

Consent letter for participants

Dear participant

You are kindly invited to participate in this research study. It is a case study involving the teaching of reading in Foundation Phase classes in the Capricorn District. The purpose of the study is to explore teachers' experience of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classes.

The research will be carried out after school contact sessions on the dates agreed upon. As participants you will be interviewed about teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. The interview will be recorded through a voice-recorder. The recording and your name will be confidential and anonymous. I will only share it with my supervisor.

This research project will assist to determine the experiences and challenges you as the teacher encounter when teaching reading in the Foundation Phase class. The experiences will be noted, analysed and used for my study.

Your participation is purely voluntary. You are allowed to withdraw at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

I look forward to your assistance.

Yours faithfully

SIGN:....*My Segooa*.....

Researcher: Mapule Yvonne Segooa

Supervisor: Dr M. J. Ramabenyane

Appendix E: Participant's Consent Form

Consent Form

The study title is: Exploring teachers' experiences of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase classes.

I, after reading about the nature and the purpose of the study agree to be part of the research. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and I am at liberty to withdraw at any time without consequences. I believe that my identity and responses to questions will be anonymous and confidential.

I hereby agree/do not agree to participate in the study.

Name of participant (Print)

.....

Signature of participant Date.....

Appendix F: Ethical clearance certificate from the UFS



Faculty of Education

23-Jul-2018

Dear **Mrs Mapule Segooa**

Ethics Clearance: **EXPLORING TEACHERS EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE CLASSES.**

Principal Investigator **Mrs Mapule Segooa**

Department **Education (Bloemfontein Campus)**

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is **HSD2017/0786**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Prof. MM Mokhele Makgalwa
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

Education Ethics Committee

Office of the Dean: Education

T: +27 (0)51 401 3777 | F: +27 (0)86 546 1113 | E: MokheleML@ufs.ac.za

Winkie Direko Building | P.O. Box/Posbus 339 | Bloemfontein 9300 | South Africa

www.ufs.ac.za



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by the concept *reading*?
2. Where do these understandings of reading come from?
3. What are your experiences of teaching reading?
4. How do you teach reading?
5. What activities do you use for teaching reading?
6. What challenges do you experience in teaching reading?
7. How do you respond to such challenges?

Appendix H: Language Editing Certificate

590 Miami Road
Hibberdene
KZN
4220

PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE EDITING SERVICES



STRIVING
FOR
EXCELLENCE

Brian Naidoo (BA Hons English; BA Hons TESOL; BEd Hons.
BA- English major; Univ. Dip. in Ed.[English special];UCT Cert.in
Legal and Business Writing; UCT Cert. in Copy-Editing; Research Prog. UFS.

**SPECIALISING IN THE LANGUAGE EDITING OF THESES, DISSERTATIONS,
JOURNAL ARTICLES, PROPOSALS, POLICIES AND PUBLICATIONS.**

CERTIFICATE FOR LANGUAGE EDITING DRAFT MASTER'S DISSERTATION

MAPULE YVONNE SEGOOA

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This certificate confirms that the above-mentioned student submitted her draft master's dissertation to me for language-editing, which included correcting in-text citations and the mistakes in the list of references. This was duly edited by me and sent back to the student for revisions as per suggestions from me. I make no claim as to the accuracy of the research content. The text, as edited by me, is grammatically correct. After completion of my language editing, the student has the option to accept or reject suggestions/changes prior to re-submission to the supervisor who will check the content and instances of plagiarism, if any.

B. Naidoo

ID: 5606255134081

DATE: 24/11/2020

Professional
EDITORS
Guild

Brian Naidoo
Associate Member

Membership number: NAI001
Membership year: March 2020 to February 2021

084 264 8401
brian.naidoo25@gmail.com

www.editors.org.za

Appendix I: Turnitin Report

**EXPLORING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF
TEACHING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE
CLASSROOMS**

ORIGINALITY REPORT

by Mapule Yvonne Segooa

Submission date: 25-Nov-2020 04:30PM (UTC+0200)

Submission ID: 1457015721

File name: Segooa-_2020.docx (4.92M)

Word count: 33440

Character count: 185423

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EXPLORING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE CLASSROOMS

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

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Instructor

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