

**Exploring the teaching of Grade 1–3 English spelling using the
Sound Reading System: A case of a Namibian primary school**

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in the subject

CURRICULUM STUDIES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR M.G. NGOEPE

JANUARY 2017

DECLARATION

I Jessica Mary-Ann Jansen, student number 36576158, declare that, “**Exploring the teaching of Grade 1–3 English spelling using the Sound Reading System: A case of a Namibian primary school**” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



Signed: Jessica Mary-Ann Jansen

5 January 2017

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Rita Zaahl, and my two daughters, Amber and Aimeè, for their love, patience and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- God Almighty, thank you for giving me life, and the strength and courage to complete my research. You deserve all the praise and glory.
- Professor M.G. Ngoepe, my supervisor, for your guidance, patience and valuable advice during every stage of this study.
- My mother and my two daughters for believing in me.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Alphabet code: A writing system based on phonemes (sounds); symbols are assigned to each sound using a letter or combination of letters. These represent the code.

Transparent alphabet code: An alphabetic writing system in which there is rarely more than one spelling for the same sound.

Opaque alphabet code: An alphabetic writing system in which there are multiple spellings for the same sound.

Consonant blend or consonant cluster: Two or more consonants in sequence in a word, for example *str* in *street*.

Phoneme awareness: The ability to hear and remember the order of phonemes in words.

Schwa vowel: Term for a ‘squashed’ vowel sound, e.g. basket/baskit. May sound like a swallowed ‘uh’ sound. Only words with two or more syllables may have a schwa. It ‘happens’ in the second or third syllable woman/womun.

Phonics: A method of teaching reading based on the sounds of letters, groups of letters, and syllables.

Phonetic: Speech sounds in words.

Synthetic phonics: Teaches from the sounds (phonemes) to the graphemes (letters).

Segmenting: Identifying each sound in a word by ‘sounding out’.

Blending: Pushing/merging the individual sounds back again to make/pronounce the word.

Sight words: Printed words that children are asked to memorise visually as a string of letters or as a shape.

ABSTRACT

Exploring the teaching of Grade 1 – 3 English spelling using the Sound Reading System: A case of a Namibian primary school

Spelling is crucial for literacy development in children and therefore needs to be taught effectively during the primary grades. A plethora of studies on spelling instruction have been carried out to shed light on the importance of applying scientifically based methods. This study investigated the implementation of the Sound Reading System (SRS) for teaching spelling in Grades 1, 2 and 3 in Namibia – a country where English is mostly acquired as a taught subject. A qualitative design was used to examine the application of the SRS in whole-class instruction in the Erongo region of Namibia. Using observations, interviews and document analysis, data was obtained from one school where the SRS was used to teach spelling. Three teachers were observed and subsequently interviewed on the teaching of English spelling. The findings revealed that, after using the SRS, teachers felt their own alphabetic knowledge had improved and their approach to teaching spelling had changed, leading to an awareness of what meaningful spelling activities entail. They felt that the methodology had provided a systematic approach to their teaching. The teachers were convinced that there is a link between spelling and reading and the methodology provided an opportunity to teach these skills simultaneously.

In terms of the SRS, an integrated approach is applied whereby the target sound becomes the focal point of language development to provide an opportunity for skill transfer. However, the teachers found it challenging to slot in all the activities in a timetable that does not cater specifically for spelling. Another challenge perceived by the teachers was the effective teaching of sight words. This study recommends teamwork between teachers and parents to ensure that all SRS activities are completed successfully at home. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of applying scientific methods in classroom practice. It further suggests that teaching the full range of spellings in the SRS be continued in Grades 4 and 5 to reinforce a deeper understanding of English orthography. Lastly, it is suggested that higher institutions link teacher training to curricular outcomes.

Key concepts:

Alphabet code, spelling, spelling instruction, phonemic awareness, phonemes, phonics, link between spelling and reading, systematic phonics, English orthography

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

The newly implemented National Curriculum for Basic Education is founded on the experience and accomplishments of the first cycle of Namibian curricula and syllabi that was announced in the 1990s.

According to the National Curriculum for Basic Education (NIED, 2010), Grade 4 is a transitional year where the medium of instruction changes from the mother tongue or predominant local language to English. This document stipulates that it is therefore crucial for learners to acquire English literacy skills in Grades 1, 2 and 3.

The Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) was initiated by the International Institute of Education Planning (IIEP), and officially launched in 1991 by seven national ministries of education, including those of Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In 1997, SACMEQ was officially registered as an independent non-governmental organisation with a membership of 15 ministries of education, which now include Mozambique, Seychelles, Botswana, South Africa, Uganda, Lesotho and Swaziland (*The Villager*, 2012). The first SACMEQ project stretched from 1995 to 1998, the second from 1998 to 2004 and the third from 2005 to 2010.

In Namibia, a study by Shikongo, Amadhila, Miranda and Dendeinge (2011) conducted in all the regions found that the majority of learners had not attained the desired level of English reading. In the SACMEQ III report written by Shikongo et al. (2011), they distinguish between basic reading skills (levels 1 to 5) and advanced reading skills (levels 6 to 8). 'Basic reading' (level 3) was found to be still below the desired level of mastery, while 'advanced reading for meaning' referred to the beginning of a desirable level of mastery. Shikongo et al (2011:137) emphasised that the ratio of Namibian learners with advanced reading skills (level 5 and above, i.e., at least 'interpretive reading') in 2007 was 35.7% compared to the 15.7% in 2000. Despite this improvement, the differences between the regions in Namibia are large, with learners in most regions not having mastered advanced reading levels. Further progress in this regard would have to occur according to the authors.

Hartney (2011) emphasised that Grade 3 learners in the Khomas region, for whom English was not the first language, experienced difficulties in reading English. Junias (2009), by contrast,

described English reading problems in the Oshana education region, and Hengari (2007) explored reading difficulties among Grade 4 learners in the Erongo education region.

While these studies identified learners' lack of reading skills in the Namibian education system, they did not explore the way reading and spelling are interrelated. Thus, the researcher found it necessary to explore the way in which a systematic spelling system for teaching English is implemented because spelling and literacy are interwoven. Moats (2005) emphasises the fact that research has shown that learning to spell and learning to read rely on much the same fundamental understanding of the relationships between letters and sounds; hence, spelling instruction can be planned in such a way that it enhances reading skills.

Spelling instruction strategies are an important part of literacy as spelling affects both the reading and writing skills of learners. This is supported by the assertion of Vellutino, Tunmer, Jaccard and Chen (2007) that spelling is the productive arrangement of letters that specifically define a word and is an important part of reading ability.

In the English Second Language Syllabus (NIED, 2014), the teaching of phonics is emphasised as a vital aspect of reading and should be taught systematically, sequentially and in context.

According to the English Second Language syllabus (NIED, 2014), Grades 1, 2 and 3 should be able to distinguish English phonemes, demonstrate phonological awareness, and sort and categorise words to identify relationships. For example

- sort words: by same initial letter (table, tub, television, tell); by same blend (dress, drive, drip, drop); by the same sound, same spelling (ship, shop, shade)
- segment familiar words into syllables, e.g. dam (1 syllable) wa/ter (2 syllables)
- sort and categorise words to identify relationships, e.g. sort words: by the same blend (splash, split, splosh); by same sound, same spelling (fur, church, burn)
- correctly spell words in isolation using a method such as 'look, say, cover, visualise, write, check'; write correctly spelt words in 'self-made' dictionary or 'have-a-go' pad for use when writing

- apply the strategy of sounding out: use knowledge of single sounds, blends and simple digraphs/diphthongs
- apply the strategy of using visual memory to visualise what a word looks like: use visual patterns, length of words, word shapes, and features in words, e.g. little words in big words (giant).

In the English First Language syllabus, (NIED, 2014) learners should

- correctly read familiar words containing grade-level consonant and vowel digraphs, e.g. /wh/, /nn/, /ew/, /ur/; sort sounds by same sound, different spelling (bird, church, fur); sort sounds by same sound, same spelling (boat, coat, float, goat)
- sort words by same sound, same spelling (moon, soon, room, spoon); play reading games and word study games
- correctly read familiar words containing grade-level trigraphs, e.g. /oor/, /dge/
- correctly read familiar words containing grade-level quadgraphs, e.g. /augh/ as in daughter; sort words by same letter pattern, different sound (thought, enough, through)
- show decoding skills and use knowledge of phonics when reading unfamiliar words, e.g. sound out single letters and grade-level blends, digraphs and diphthongs; use onset and rime strategies, e.g. b-at; m-en, s-it; d-og, s-un
- use knowledge of phonics when reading unfamiliar words, e.g. sound out grade-level blends, digraphs, trigraphs, quad graphs and diphthongs; use onset and rime strategies, e.g. str-um; spl-ash, squ-are
- use a variety of spelling strategies: sound out; use knowledge of letter/sound relationships (phonics) to take words apart, attach sounds to parts of words and blend sounds.

The National Curriculum for Basic Education (NIED, 2010) states:

The main challenge of curriculum reform is in the implementation of the curriculum. It is therefore essential that all teachers, who are the implementers of the curriculum, take ownership and implement it with commitment. The preconditions for the curriculum itself include that it is coherent and consistent,

well-articulated, meaningful and relevant to the learner, manageable by the teacher, and reflects the demands of society.

This research was embarked on to understand the way in which the Sound Reading System (SRS), as a systematic spelling methodology, is implemented in Grades 1, 2 and 3 in a primary school in the Erongo region of Namibia. As Hilden and Jones (2012: 20) state, it is crucial to have an explicit method of spelling instruction in place because the skills required for learning to spell are foundational for reading and writing.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Murray (2007), the basic competencies of Namibian learners have not been established well enough to implement a second language (English) as a medium of instruction on a formal basis in Grade 4. Like any other subject to be taught, knowledge of the English orthography is essential to enhance the teacher's ability to teach English effectively. Murray (2007) contends that teachers' capability and proficiency in the language of instruction, and in second language teaching, needs to be recognised and addressed.

Of course, learners will also need knowledge of the English orthography. Vellutino et al. (2007: 4) emphasise that "fledgling readers must acquire explicit knowledge and functional use of the alphabetic code". There is a need for the implementation of effective teaching methodology.

Hall (2014) states that poor reading can be damaging to children's literacy because of the interrelated nature of spelling, reading and writing. Overt teaching of spelling involves a purposeful, planned presentation of orthographic knowledge by the teacher for the students (Hall, 2014). It is against this background that the need arises to understand how Sound Reading System is applied as methodology to teach English spelling in Grades 1, 2 and 3.

1.3. AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to provide an awareness of the way in which the use of the Sound Reading System as a method for teaching English spelling in Grades 1, 2 and 3 in Namibia may possibly improve learners' spelling skills and, consequently, improve their understanding of English orthography.

1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research will comprise a case study of the way in which the Sound Reading System, as a method of spelling instruction, is implemented in Grades 1, 2 and 3 in a Namibian school. The case study will be guided by two research questions:

1. What are the benefits and limitations of teaching spelling by applying the Sound Reading System?
2. What adjustments, if any, do teachers make to ensure that the Sound Reading System as a spelling programme is appropriate for Namibia?

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In view of the poor English reading skills displayed by primary school learners in Namibia, improvement in the transfer of these skills is important (Shikongo et al. (2011). A case study of the Sound Reading System will offer more insight into how spelling is taught.

Thus, the significance of this study is to

- highlight the importance of having strategies in place for spelling instruction
- provide feedback to concerned bodies (notably curriculum designers, textbook publishers, teachers, researchers and parents) to help them improve the teaching–learning process of English spelling in primary schools
- encourage further research or reflection on the efficacy of research-based spelling instruction methods or practices
- emphasise the link between spelling and reading.

In view of the important issues listed above it becomes necessary to conduct a case study on the way spelling is taught using the method identified as the Sound Reading System (from here on referred to as the SRS).

1.6. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the way the SRS is implemented in a Namibian school to teach English spelling. This will be done by describing the way in which the use of the SRS method has affected the teaching of English spelling in the Junior Primary phase (i.e. Grades 1–3) in a Namibian school. In view of the fact that it is important for teachers to teach spelling

efficiently during the foundation years of schooling to prepare students for successful writing, reading and active participation in contemporary society throughout their lives (Graham, Morphy, Harris, Fink-Chorzempa, Saddler, Moran & Mason, 2008), this investigation was intended to gain insight on the application of the SRS.

1.7. DEMARCATION

McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 326) clearly state that before sampling is done, a site should be identified which will be appropriate for the intended study. In this case study, a specific school in a specific region in Namibia was selected because the SRS has been in use in this school since 2011 and the researcher resided in the region. The teachers selected to participate in the study were familiar with the SRS method and had applied it in their classrooms. Therefore, these teachers were considered to be information-rich individuals. McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 328) mention that the qualitative researcher will gain more understanding from the information richness of the case and their analytical abilities than from the sample size. The decision to focus on one school where the SRS method has been implemented for teaching reading was deemed suitable because the purpose of this study was to explore and describe the SRS method for teaching spelling. The perceptions of teachers who used the SRS method were relevant to this study, therefore the Grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers were purposely selected.

1.8. CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

The following concepts will constitute the subject matter for this study: decoding, encoding, digraph, orthography, phoneme, phonological awareness, Sound Reading System (SRS), spelling and spelling instruction.

Decoding

The act of translating symbols which represent certain units of something back into those units (translating from letters to phonemes [reading]).

Encoding

The act of transcribing the units of a specific category (speech/music) into a set of arbitrary symbols; for example, transcribing phonemes into their spellings.

Digraph

Two letters representing one phoneme: *sh* in *rush*.

Orthography

Refers to standard spelling; this is the patterns of permissible spellings for the sounds in the words of a writing system.

Phoneme

The smallest unit of speech that people can hear; corresponds to consonants and vowels.

Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness (PA) is defined as “the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyse the auditory aspects of spoken language (including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables, or phonemes), independent of meaning” (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008: 8).

Sound Reading System (SRS)

A systematic approach of teaching the English alphabet code developed by Fiona Nevola (2007) and based on the spelling code as analysed by Diane McGuinness.

Spelling

Spelling requires a learner to produce, in written form, the correct sequence of letters that form a particular word.

Spelling instruction

Refers to the teaching of the English writing system.

Writing system

A code in which specific elements of a language are mapped systematically to graphic signs or symbols.

1.9. RESEARCH OUTLINE

Chapter 1 discussed the background, the problem statement, the objectives and the significance of the study, as well as the research design. In Chapter 2 a comprehensive literature review will be discussed. The literature reviewed focuses on the relationship between spelling and reading, the complex English writing system and the SRS as a method for teaching spelling in the foundation years. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature review.

In Chapter 3 a description of the research design is presented. McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 31) describe the research design and the procedures for conducting a study as including when, from whom and under what conditions the data were obtained. In this study, the data were collected during the second term of the academic year from selected Grade 1, 2 and 3 classes. The data collection by the researcher occurred during English spelling periods in which she acted as both an observer and an interviewer. The study focused on how the SRS is implemented in teaching spelling. The specific measures used to ensure research ethics are also discussed.

Chapter 4 presents the data analysis and sets out the research findings. The findings of this study are compared with certain findings identified in the literature review.

In Chapter 5, the research is summarised and certain recommendations are made and conclusions reported. The significance of the investigation is also discussed.

1.10. DELIMITATIONS

The aim to this study was to determine the strengths and limitations of the SRS methodology in teaching English spelling, however, only one school was selected. This was because the teachers in this school had implemented this system. Therefore, to be able to report on SRS implementation, an in-depth investigation in the form of a case study was carried out. As only one school was investigated in this study, the findings do not provide a conclusion that is generalisable; the conclusion is only applicable to the school within its own context. It was therefore not directly relevant to pursue schools that did not apply this methodology. It is therefore a bounded conclusion. In addition, the researcher was both the sole researcher and an observer, which may have led to subjectivity in the study. Nevertheless, to ensure the trustworthiness of this research in terms of the accurate explanation and administration of

information, the transcription of the focus interview, the observation notes and the document study notes were reviewed by an expert educator and a colleague.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the literature review, current research in the area of literacy informs the understanding about how effective teachers are in developing the spelling skills of their learners. The literature focused on the teaching of English spelling in the foundation years and the development of the teaching of English spelling. In this chapter spelling is defined, historical perspectives on English spelling are provided and recent approaches and practices in the teaching of English spelling, such as SRS and THRASS, are described.

2.1. EXPLORING THE TEACHING OF SPELLING IN GRADES 1, 2 AND 3

It is essential that spelling be taught effectively in the primary grades because it is such a significant factor in literacy development in young children (Graham, Morphy, Harris, Fink-Chorzempa, Saddler, Moran & Mason, 2008). Graham et al. (2008) also contend that spelling is essential for reading comprehension. Other researchers (Wolter & Dilworth, 2013; Ehri, 2014) have shown that the ultimate development in linguistic awareness occurs in the primary grades. Based on these findings it is possible to argue that it is during this phase (Grades 1–3) that crucial interventions can be made to ensure and optimise learning success. In further support of this argument, Ehri's (2014) work on the four phases in children's word reading and spelling development emphasises that it is indeed during the primary years that sufficient development should take place. These phases are discussed later.

Academic success is profoundly affected by spelling because it is directly linked to reading success (Barberio-Kitts, McLaughlin, Neyman, Worcester & Cartmell, 2014). Barberio-Kitts et al. (2014) drew on previous research (Graham et al., 2008), subsequently advising teachers to use spelling instruction methods that are regarded as evidence based. Furthermore, Joshi, Treiman, Carreker and Moats (2009) found that most teachers are still using methods which are not based on research evidence – approaches to teaching spelling that have been around for many years (Davis, 2011). For example, spelling is taught by writing words on flashcards and showing them to students repeatedly or by having students write the spelling words down a few times until they remember how to spell them. Regrettably, such techniques are not research based (Joshi et al., 2009). Various researchers (Fresch, 2003; Westwood, 2008) have attributed this use of outdated methods to the possibility that teachers are not always aware of the

developmental nature of spelling and resort to wordlists and memorisation which leads to spelling not being taught effectively in many schools.

Knowledge about sound patterns that children acquire in the early years through instruction helps them to decode new words in their reading. As they mature and begin to spell longer and more complex words, children apply this knowledge of base words, prefixes, and suffixes to their spelling (Ehri, 2000; Foorman & Petsche, 2010; Hutcheon, Campbell & Stewart, 2012; Ehri, 2014). This knowledge of morphology, in turn, helps children to analyse longer words in their future reading. In addition, Templeton (2015) maintains that spelling knowledge provides the basis for explicit awareness and an understanding of morphology, which may guide the logical growth of vocabulary knowledge as mentioned also by (Foorman & Petsche, 2010).

It is common practice for teachers to teach vocabulary by taking a break from the story/lesson and clarifying the meanings of new words. This implies that they only talk about the definitions. Recent research (Rosenthal & Ehri, 2008) has found that teachers can boost the acquisition of vocabulary if they also show students the spelling of a new word while they pronounce it and clarify its meaning. As students see the spelling, connections are formed in the memory that link letters to sounds in the pronunciation, and this better secures the pronunciation and meaning in the memory compared to just hearing the pronunciation and the meaning (Ehri, 2014).

Knowledge of the spelling of words is an integral part of successful text-reading efficiency and reading comprehension (Hutcheon et al., 2012). Correct spelling requires knowledge of the phonological, orthographic and morphological information in words – knowledge regarded as essential to the correct decoding of words for early reading (Hutcheon et al., 2012; Ehri, 2014) and for quality written work.

2.1.1. Definition of spelling

Spelling refers to producing the correct orthographic representation of a written word (Reed, 2012). It is regarded as an important literacy skill needed for the advancement of writing and reading and thus more consideration should be given to spelling instruction, strategies and teaching methods (Davis, 2011). Spelling is a psychological, linguistic, and conceptual process involving knowledge of the alphabet, syllables, word meaning, and the history of words (Joshi et al., 2009). It is important to regard spelling as fundamental to academic success as it affects

reading success (Barberio-Kitts et al., 2014). So it is essential to identify effective strategies and apply them effectively.

2.1.2. Historical perspectives on English spelling

Reed (2012) explains that for many years, spelling has been idling on the back burner in education, most likely because teachers either regarded reading and writing skills as more important or assumed that the English language spelling system is too irregular and unpredictable to make instruction worthwhile. This latter assumption has been disproved by researchers (Simonsen & Gunter, 2001; Moats, 2009; Adams-Gordon, 2010) who promote the explicit teaching of English spelling.

In the past, accurate spelling was the absolute goal of the spelling lesson without any attempt to teach meaning (Sawyer & Joyce, 2006). I believe this method is not viable and it is most likely that after a while of not using a word which has no meaning in any case, a learner might simply forget about it. In this age of discarding things that have no apparent use, we are challenged to find a purposeful method for teaching spelling effectively.

In the mid-1800s, spelling instruction was investigated for its total disregard for word meaning. Later, in the 20th century, linguistically-based research concluded that English orthography embodied logical and predictable patterns embedded in semantics (word meaning) as well as phonology (Sawyer & Joyce, 2006). Spelling was acknowledged as much more than a mere rote memorisation activity, a process of linguistic and cognitive progress.

Many spelling programmes have seen the light of day and it is imperative to be able to identify effective programmes.

2.1.3. Phases of spelling

The spelling system is made up of three layers of information: the alphabetic or letter-sound layer; the pattern layer (which links variant spellings of a sound to its position in a syllable); and the meaning layer (which links the spelling of different words that are related in meaning, such as human and humane), as indicated by Reed (2012), Hall (2014) and Basner (2014).

After years of research into spelling development, various stage or phase names were identified, with researchers settling on the following five stages: emergent, letter-name alphabetic, within-word pattern, syllables and affixes, and derivational relation (Fender, 2008; Reed, 2012; Hall, 2014).

The five stages through which a child's spelling development progresses are as follows:

1. Emergent stage (e.g. write in letter-like forms)
2. Letter name stage (e.g. short vowels, consonant blends)
3. Within word pattern stage (e.g. r-controlled vowels, long vowel patterns, diphthongs)
4. Syllables and affixes stage (e.g. inflectional endings, syllabication)
5. Derivational relations stage (e.g. assimilated and absorbed prefixes, suffixes and parts of speech).

The spelling phases are identified by Ehri (2014) as the a) pre-alphabetic phase, b) partial alphabetic phase, c) full alphabetic phase, and d) the consolidated alphabetic phase. Instruction that promotes orthographic mapping transfers the knowledge and skills that bring about connections to be triggered when words are seen and read. Therefore, the writing system, phonemic segmenting and decoding skills should be taught explicitly (Ehri, 2014).

These stages of spelling provide the teacher with practical guidelines that can be used to determine the spelling stage of learners. The teacher is therefore able to plan accordingly to provide the knowledge, skills and strategies that will enable learners to master the skills they lack.

2.1.4. Characteristics of effective spelling practices

Knowledge of letter patterns in words presents students with valuable hints for spelling. Students should be motivated to recognise and use English spelling patterns through systematic, explicit instruction and activities. Such instruction necessitates proper spelling lesson preparation, but it is more productive than learning words by rote (Joshi et al., 2009).

This expectation from teachers clearly indicates that English spelling patterns and the systematic teaching thereof should be fundamental to teacher education and in-service training to ensure that teachers are adequately equipped to comply.

It is established that frequent engagement with written words or the explicit teaching of spelling rules, fosters an increased awareness among children regarding allowable letter combinations (e.g. ck is found at the end but not the beginning of English words) and general spelling rules or orthographic patterns (e.g. long- vs short-vowel rules) (Apel, 2011).

Phonological awareness instruction, reading and spelling development are interconnected and should be taught during the primary grades (Hayward, Phillips & Sych, 2014). Hayward et al. (2014) refer to the National Early Literacy Panel (2008: 3), which defines phonological awareness as “the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyse the auditory aspects of spoken language (including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables, or phonemes), free of meaning”. Phonological awareness entails the knowledge of the sound structure of a spoken word. Phonemic awareness is a component of phonological awareness and refers to aspects associated with the focus on and manipulation of individual speech sounds within words. This manipulation may include blending sounds into words, segmenting words into sounds, and deleting, substituting, or adding sounds in words. Hayward et al. (2014) specify that an impediment to the meticulous teaching of phonological awareness is that many teachers confuse the instruction of phonological awareness with the instruction of phonics (i.e. letter–sound relationships) and call upon teachers to ensure that they themselves have a thorough understanding of phonological awareness and the differences between phonological awareness and phonics instruction. Ehri (2014) affirms that orthographic mapping (as mentioned earlier) is triggered by phonemic consciousness and grapheme-phoneme understanding. Therefore, it suffices to say that phonemic awareness and grapheme-phoneme knowledge are essential to effective spelling instruction.

It is important to note that phonics is essential for the emergent speller or reader and fluent decoding skills are obligatory for developing good reading skills. Language structure should be imparted in an organised, explicit and systematic way (Moats, 2007). Systematic phonics instruction is a method of instruction that teaches students how graphemes in written language and phonemes in spoken language relate and how to use these relations to read and spell words. Phonics instruction is systematic when all the major grapheme–phoneme correspondences are explicitly taught in a well-defined order or system. Rose (2006) stresses that research has revealed the significance of systematic phonic teaching for beginner readers.

Furthermore, Moats (2009) emphasises that being trained in the discrimination of confusable phonemes and words is crucial for reading and spelling acquisition. This is an area that calls for research on its own, but it is regarded as an important element for success in literacy. The teacher can then comment specifically when words are confusing or perceived as ambiguous speech so as to enlighten and consolidate learner understanding of English orthography.

Moats (2009) also states that English orthography embodies sounds, syllable patterns, and meaningful word parts (morphemes), along with the language from which a word originated. Phonics and spelling instruction demand explicit explanations. Therefore, explicit explanation of the English orthography, which includes the sounds, syllable patterns, meaningful word parts (morphemes), and the language of origin is needed. Similarly, Ehri (2014) contends that as knowledge of the spelling–sound system develops and nurtures spelling patterns, the learner can use these patterns (spellings of syllables, prefixes, and suffixes) to form connections and recollect the spelling and reading of words with many syllables. Moats (2009) emphasises that well-taught phonic decoding entails more than mere letter–sound correspondence for each letter of the alphabet.

In their investigation, Johnston, McGeown and Watson (2011) found that the learners taught using synthetic phonics had better word reading, spelling, and reading comprehension skills. This is in line with Holsted’s (2014) emphasis on the particularity of phonics programmes. Non-systematic phonics programmes such as literature-based programmes, basal reading programmes, and sight-word programmes do not teach phonics explicitly and systematically. On the other hand, a systematic phonics programme offers the teaching of a carefully chosen and advantageous set of letter–sound relationships arranged in a logical instructional method (Holsted, 2014). In Pettijohn’s (2014) comparison of traditional spelling methods (worksheets and repetitive writing) and non-traditional methods (writing words using different textures, role-play), it was found that learners respond positively to creative, fun activities and scored higher marks when such methods were used. On the other hand, Wallace (2006) is convinced that if teachers view spelling as a developmental process and accept that learners are at different levels, their own methodologies might improve. He suggested providing levelled word lists and teaching explicit techniques on how to study spelling words. Still, Nies and Belfiore (2006) warned that although spelling programmes may be perceived as tedious, it is important not to employ attractive methods that children find entertaining but for which there is no research-based evidence to back up such methods.

2.2. SPELLING METHODOLOGIES

There are more speech sounds than letters (e.g. 15–18 vowel phonemes and six vowel letters) and letters are often used in combination (e.g. ee, ea, e-e, ey, eigh) to spell those sounds (Moats, 2009). Nevola (2007) states that there are about 176 spellings for nearly 44 sounds in English. This implies that there are not always sound–symbol correspondences and therefore English

spelling patterns must be explicitly learnt (Moats, 2005). Many scholars have formulated strategies for improving the teaching of spelling. For example, Wallace (2006) supposed that in order to enhance spelling, learners need to sound out each word slowly and look for visual patterns.

In their work, Joshi et al. (2009) argue that English offers a sequence that may provide guidelines for the systematic planning of English spelling: They provide a systematic approach which starts in Grade 1 with Anglo-Saxon words with regular consonant and vowel sound–letter correspondences. More complex Anglo-Saxon letter patterns are taught in Grade 2. In Grade 3, students learn how to spell multisyllabic words, and Latin-based prefixes, suffixes and roots are taught in Grade 4. In support of this view, Fisher and Frey (2013) highlight the importance of including more than just words that are frequently used; they stipulate that the share of words from each of these classifications will fluctuate depending on the developmental spelling levels of the learners. They include word patterns, Latin and Greek root words, affixes, high-frequency words and commonly misspelt words.

Adams-Gordon (2010) acknowledges three main approaches to spelling. First is an approach that assumes that if reading is taught by the phonics method, spelling does not need to be taught separately. The second assumption is based on teaching spelling formally through the systematic memorisation of organised lists of high frequency words. The last approach maintains that it is not necessary to teach spelling at all because spelling skills are enhanced through a basically experiential method while reading and writing skills are taught. Adams-Gordon (2010) argues that a well-balanced approach where these three methods are combined secures effective spelling instruction. An effective spelling programme consists of basic phonetics instruction, essential instruction on the morphological (meaningful units), grammatical, syntactical and etymological (word origins) characteristics of English words, and the memorisation of high frequency words. Adams-Gordon (2010) argues that a single approach will not offer a complete and well-rounded programme, but a well-chosen and blended combination of the above-mentioned three basic approaches to spelling instruction will. Phonetics instruction, memorisation of high frequency word lists, and functional writing will be employed to master spelling words and skills. It is not simply a matter of combining one or two of these approaches; it requires a balanced integration of all three approaches. Each approach has a valuable role to play in the overall acquisition and application of spelling skills.

Spelling Power is a complete linguistics approach which was defined by Adams-Gordon (2010).

Templeton's (2015) *Word Study in Action* is a developmentally based approach to word study which includes phonics, spelling and vocabulary instruction. This approach redirects the research on the developmental nature of word knowledge. An awareness and understanding of word structure at the alphabetic, pattern and meaning levels build consecutively upon one another. Students' efficient and meaningful engagement with text depends on their understanding of the ways in which letters in printed words represent this information about language – its sounds, its structure, and its meaning (Templeton, 2015). The purpose of word study is active study where students examine words to determine the regularities, patterns and conventions of English orthography needed to read and spell. Furthermore, word study increases specific knowledge of words – the spelling and meaning of individual words (Templeton, 2015).

Synthetic phonics is regarded as a successful approach to the teaching of reading and spelling. The 'synthetic' component reflects the practice of 'synthesising', or blending together. The 'phonic' part reflects the process of linking individual speech sounds (phonemes) to written symbols (graphemes). Fundamentally, when a child learns to read by using synthetic phonics they learn to link letters to speech sounds and then blend these sounds together to read words. They also learn to separate (segment) words into their basic sounds and tie these sounds to letters in order to spell them. Synthetic phonics, an accelerated form of phonics, does not begin with initial sight vocabulary. In this approach, children are taught letter sounds before they are introduced to books. After the first few sounds have been taught they are shown how they can be blended together to build up words. For example, when taught the letter sounds /t/ /p/ /a/ and /s/ the children can build up the words 'tap', 'pat', 'pats', 'taps', 'a tap' etc. (Johnston & Watson, 2005).

Linguistic phonics programmes are closely related to modern synthetic phonics programmes as they also work from simple to complex, and spelling is integrated from the beginning. In linguistic phonics instruction, grapheme–phoneme correspondences are always taught in the context of real words, therefore flash cards showing isolated graphemes such as 'ea', 'ow' and 'ou' are not used. Comparing the spellings of actual words in context escalates the brain's capacity to analyse and thus also to recall (Nevola, 2007). Nevola (2007) points out that in linguistic phonics programmes, when the complex code (that English sounds are represented

by multiple spellings) is taught, several of the most common spellings for a sound are presented concurrently, instead of individually, with the less common spellings presented at a later stage; multiple spellings in the context of real words are introduced simultaneously to enable the learner to create a mental image of this.

Davis (2011) compared five spelling programmes at three grade levels. A content analysis was done of both teacher and student editions of spelling books to understand what theoretical contexts, lessons and activities were included and whether they related to research-based practices in spelling. Davis (2011) scrutinised generally applied spelling programmes in the United States, based on district and state adoption lists, and analysed the theoretic applications in these materials. Programmes approved by several of the largest textbooks adoption states in the United States were studied to ascertain whether these spelling programmes reflected research-based practices. The five programmes were evaluated in terms of whether they reflected current research evidence, catered for diverse abilities and whether newly acquired spelling skills were transferred to writing activities. One programme only was found to employ research-based methods, incorporating the theory of developmental stages of spelling. This theory is very important because it informs the process for teaching spelling patterns and rules in line with a student's stage of development. These are the types of activity that eliminate the traditional rote memorisation of words. It was also found that all the programmes featured activities to address diversity. These features are important when we decide what methodologies to employ in the classroom.

2.3. EXPLORING THE SOUND READING SYSTEM AS A METHODOLOGY FOR TEACHING ENGLISH SPELLING

2.3.1. The definition of Sound Reading System

The SRS is a synthetic phonics reading and spelling programme grounded in a model developed by Diane McGuinness, who based it on research data (Brooks, 2013). Every lesson aims to encourage proficiency in phoneme segmenting and blending, the mastery of sound–symbol relationships, handwriting, spelling, reading fluency and reading comprehension. Children are encouraged to regard the English writing system as a code and to learn exactly how this code works (Brooks, 2013). Grant (2014), however, warns that without constant review and repetition of good practice, some children can slip into bad practice.

McGuinness (2007) identified four features of the English alphabet code. A phoneme can be spelt, firstly, using one letter, like /p-e-t /; secondly, by using two to four letters: h-i-ll / sh-i-p; thirdly, in multiple ways: d-ay / t-r-ai-n / l-a-k-e / b-r-ea-k /; and lastly, spelling can represent more than one phoneme: g-r-ea-t / c-l-ea-n / b-r-ea-d.

On the website for Phonics International (2011), three facts are highlighted. One, two, three or four letters can be code for one phoneme (sound), for example /c / in **cat**, /f/ in **elephant**, **igh** in **right** and /ai/ **eigh** in **eight**. Most phonemes can be represented by different graphemes such as /oa/ as o, oa, ow, oe, eau, ough. Some graphemes can be coded for more than one phoneme like **ough** for /oa/ in **though**, /ou/in **plough**, /or/ in **thought**, long /oo/ in **through**.

For the 44 phonemes in English, the 26 letters of the alphabet are not sufficient and, according to McGuinness (2004), more than 176 spellings are used. Others (Moats, 2005; Foorman & Petsche, 2010) refer to 40 phonemes and more than 250 graphemes. It is my opinion that since English is not a simple alphabetic language and indeed a complex one, it undeniably has a code which should be taught in a systematic, explicit way.

2.3.2. The development of the Sound Reading System

Nevola (2007) developed the SRS as a method for teaching learners the English alphabet code based on teaching a sound-to-print orientation. Sounds, not letters, are the basis of the code; phonemes are also taught to segment and blend. Consequently, the link between spelling and reading (encoding and decoding) is acknowledged.

The more these activities can be combined, the faster the child will acquire the skills needed to read and spell. The SRS was initially designed for the flawed reader, but it can be implemented equally effectively as a catch-up, individual or whole-class methodology. The SRS aims to introduce learners to the code in careful, systematic steps, from the simplest to the most complex. From one sound = one spelling (c-a-t) to one sound = many spellings (e in **sheep**, **be**, **cream**, **happy**) (McGuinness, 2007)

Boyadzhyan (2012) states that word recognition, spelling and reading comprehension are embedded in a systematic phonics programme. Phonics training assists children to understand and learn the interconnectedness between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language. The three skills Boyadzhyan (2012) identifies for engaging in the English

code are blending, segmenting and phoneme manipulation. It remains vital that teachers are trained to teach phonics systematically.

2.3.3. Characteristics of the Sound Reading System

The SRS is an approach to the teaching of reading and spelling based on the English spelling system. It was founded in the belief that the brain cannot make sense of randomness and therefore the sounds are taught in a systematic manner (Nevola, 2006). The SRS programme teaches all the information essential for learning how to decode. The entire English alphabet code is taught in a series of logical steps and can be used for all age groups, including teens and adults.

There are three stages of spelling taught in the SRS: In the foundation stage, one-to-one correspondences for 23 sounds are introduced (5 vowels and 18 letters). In stage 1, sound spellings are centred on multiple spellings for each sound, but only the most common four or five spellings for each sound are taught. Stage 2 includes the full array of spellings and advanced multi-syllable work.

The representations for each sound are mastered through the systematic, controlled introduction of sounds and varied repetition, using worksheets, dictionary activities, reading of pre-selected text, copying, dictation and creative writing.

A typical SRS lesson would include

- (a) building and writing words
- (b) sound processing
- (c) really reading
- (d) spelling.

(a) Building and writing words

In this part of the lesson, the objective is to teach the alphabetic principles in incremental steps, starting with the simplest first – one letter represents one sound.

The teacher hands out letter tiles and white paper. Then the child has to arrange the letter tiles on the white paper. After building the word, the teacher will teach the child to write the word down.

(b) Sound processing

For this activity, only the tiles will be used. The teacher will have a list of words which are to be built. The learner will say each sound as he/she puts down the tiles and build the words.

(c) Really reading

The teacher will teach the learner to read from left to right, using the sound–symbol relation and blending to make whole words.

(d) Spelling

The teacher will use the sound processing list and the really reading stories. The child must feel supported; the teacher will cue the sounds and the child must say each sound as they write it down. Later on, the teacher will give the spelling words without sound cues. Brooks (2013) evaluated the SRS as an intervention for learners with literacy difficulties and found that it led to significant improvement in spelling, reading and comprehension.

2.3.4. Criticism of synthetic phonics

Grant (2012) indicates that although synthetic phonics are criticised for being too casual about the complex nature of written English, good synthetic phonics programmes teach the complexity of the English written code. Children are expected to do more than just sound out words phonemically and therefore phonics is regarded as too superficial.

In England, because of the compulsory implementation of phonics, the possibility exists that children may become discouraged when bombarded with phonics and the accompanying boring activities (Lyle, 2015). Lyle's main concern is that letter-sound correspondence is not sufficient to teach reading and mentions that it also fails to explain homographs and homophones as in bow (and arrows), bow (to the queen) and bough (of a tree). Lyle claims that letter-sound correspondence does not distinguish between voiced and voiceless digraphs like the voiced *th* in *the* and *this* and the voiceless *th* in *thin* and *thick*. According to Lyle, phonics can teach decoding but not coding. Additionally, Lyle (2015) criticised the decoding of non-words and found it to be a meaningless activity that children can find confusing.

Gross (2010) describes three main issues that researchers have with phonic instructional methods. The first issue relates to the complex nature of the English orthography. Because it contains many odd and irregular spellings, researchers claim that it cannot be taught purely

phonetically and have proposed mixed methods instead. The second issue is that phonics seems too mechanical and tedious and therefore dampens children's interest in books. The third issue lies in the inability of phonics to cater for diversity (Gross, 2010). Gross (2010) also mentions that phonics is perceived as a government initiative which led to teachers feeling left out of decision making and a consequent lack of enthusiasm and ownership occurred. Phonics is generally regarded as too rigid and authoritative in an era of child-centredness (Gross 2010; Lyle, 2015).

Moreover, Adams-Gordon (2010) maintains that phonics itself does not teach meaningfully because an effective spelling curriculum should integrate the three basic approaches to spelling instruction: phonetics instruction, memorisation of high frequency word lists, and functional writing to master spelling words and skills. Grant (2011) responded to the notion that proponents of phonics ignore the complex nature of English by explaining that good, systematic programmes teach both the basic and the advanced code and regard this opaque code with the significance it requires.

Many teachers have criticised phonics for not explaining irregular words as well as the practice of teaching them separately, the way irregular words are taught as 'sight words' and why the fact that some words are irregular is not explained. Moreover, no explanation has been given for why phonics does not always work. The delay in introducing books to learners is another reason why some teachers are sceptical about phonics.

This concludes the criticism of the use phonics to teach spelling.

2.4. THE THRASS METHODOLOGY AS A METHOD FOR TEACHING READING AND SPELLING

THRASS (Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills) is a synthetic and analytic phonics programme designed specifically to teach reading and spelling skills by using pictures and keywords. It teaches children all 44 phonemes in spoken English and the graphs (one-letter graphemes), digraphs (two-letter graphemes), trigraphs (three-letter graphemes) and quadgraphs (four-letter graphemes) of written English (Condy, Chigona, Chetty & Thornhill, 2010). THRASS provides guidance for the first three years of teaching literacy and uses pictures to illustrate two, three and four letter graphemes (Callinan & Van der Zee, 2010). The THRASS picture chart places all letters that sound the same in the same box. This is done to eliminate confusion and help the child to make the correct spelling choice. The THRASS

programme also puts emphasis on knowledge of the alphabet, and the naming of the lower-case letters and their capitals, using the correct terms and handwriting skills. Learners are taught to recognise each grapheme, then sound out each phoneme in a word and blend it to pronounce the word phonetically. Analytic phonics refers to whole-to-part learning, which is the analysis of whole words to detect phonetic or orthographic (spelling) patterns, then splitting them into smaller parts to help with decoding. Condy et al, explored final year students' perceptions regarding THRASS after they have received programme training and found that respondents were not confident about using THRASS in classrooms. The students felt they needed more time in training and with the materials to be able to use this programme effectively.

An in-depth investigation (Goosen, 2013) was undertaken to determine whether the THRASS methodology would perhaps improve the reading and spelling abilities of Grade 2 English second-language learners at an inner-city school in Pretoria, South Africa. South Africa and Namibia face similar challenges as most learners in both countries do not speak English as a home language. The research in Pretoria explored the reading and spelling difficulties encountered by learners. Goosen maintained that THRASS could also be used for English second-language learners to help them succeed in a first-language environment as they are encouraged to search for the correct spelling choice and write other words that have the same sound. This research study found that although the reading abilities of the Grade 2 learners had improved, there was no substantial improvement in their spelling abilities.

2.5. SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the literature elaborating on the development of English spelling and the definition thereof was firstly reviewed. Secondly, the SRS and its development as a method for teaching spelling in Grades 1, 2 and 3 were explored. The literature review clarified the nature of English orthography, as well as what the instruction of spelling should consist of. A shift away from rote memorisation was noted, as researchers promoted the use of scientifically based methods to teach spelling effectively. Spelling is a linguistic skill that includes orthography, phonology, morphemes and word meaning. It is important to note that the primary years are the most important when it comes to teaching spelling, as it is here that the acquisition of phonic knowledge mainly occurs.

The SRS teaches all the information essential for learning how to decode. This systematic approach is embedded in the four main characteristics of the English alphabet and the wordlist, worksheets and letter tiles form part of its resources used by teachers.

The case study that follows was carried out in order to explore the way in which the SRS method may be used to teach English spelling when implemented in the primary grades. The following chapter discusses the data collection and the data analysis.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, the literature on English spelling methodology was reviewed. In this chapter, the research design and the methods used to determine how the SRS is applied as a spelling methodology in Namibia are discussed. The poor English reading and spelling skills of primary school learners in Namibia indicates that improvement in the transfer of this skill is important Shikongo et al. (2011). The case study of the Sound Reading System (SRS) is intended to offer more insight on how spelling is taught.

The following research questions were formulated for this study:

What are the benefits and limitations of teaching spelling by applying the Sound Reading System?

What adjustments, if any, did teachers make to ensure that the Sound Reading System as a spelling programme is indeed appropriate for Namibia?

To respond to these research questions and achieve the aim of this study, a description of the research design and the methodology are provided. The first section discusses the research design and describes the research setting. Therefore, the methodological paradigm, research design, research site, teachers and setting are first discussed followed by the details of the ethical considerations. Issues relating to sampling, data analysis, triangulation and the trustworthiness of the study are also explained.

3.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a qualitative approach in terms of which an attempt was made to obtain an understanding of a social phenomenon from the teachers' perspectives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Human actions are believed to be influenced by the settings in which they occur (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The paradigm of qualitative research is rooted in the social sciences which, according to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2002), involve the study of people. In other words, qualitative research is concerned with the meaning of human behaviour and experiences, and of its social functions. The selected Lower Primary teachers

were studied to construct explanations on how the SRS was implemented as a spelling methodology.

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

In qualitative research, as described by McMillan and Schumacher (2010), behaviour is studied as it occurs naturally, and neither behaviour nor settings are manipulated. By sitting in the classroom and observing as the natural classroom activities occurred, this study focused on the SRS as an English spelling methodology. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) further point out that a research design strives to find a suitable way of obtaining evidence to answer the research question. The world of the teachers was entered and all that was happening in this environment during the English spelling lessons was observed. After observing the lessons, the teaching process was described in detail by listening to the accounts and narratives of the teachers and constructing explanations of events.

As a qualitative researcher, it was essential to become part of the classroom setting to obtain first-hand experience of the way the SRS is implemented. Spelling lessons were observed and official documents like the Revised Curriculum and the official document referred to as the Integrated Planning Manual for Grades 1, 2 and 3 (NIED, 2015) were scrutinised. Personal documents like learners' spelling books and test books were also analysed. Qualitative research is concerned with observing from the participants' perspective and within their context. Hence, a context-based interpretation was established. In other words, the research was based on the qualitative researcher's belief that human actions are embedded in the settings or context in which they take place. Otherwise stated, it would be difficult to understand how SRS is implemented without understanding the context within which the teachers operated.

The qualitative researcher attempts to re-enact the actuality of the situation from the participant's point of view (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The point here is that this investigation strove to analyse the qualitative nature of an English spelling methodology based on the teachers' experiences and perceptions.

In view of both the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative research methodology that were applied in this study, a case study was deemed the most appropriate design to focus this research.

3.3.1. Case study

A case study design was chosen in this study, which took the form of an in-depth inquiry into the personal experiences of the teachers when teaching English spelling. The intention was to examine the theories underlying the teaching of spelling and to study the way the SRS teaches spelling in the Lower Primary Phase.

De Vos et al. (2002) highlight the fact that when conducting a case study, the researcher should, before entering the research site to carry out the fieldwork, be properly equipped with comprehensive knowledge of the applicable literature. Accordingly, before the fieldwork was attempted, the literature on spelling methods was explored and the current curriculum was studied. Consequently, a better understanding of why teachers applied a thematic approach in their classrooms was assured. In this case, a thematic approach was required by the curriculum and lessons were based mainly on themes from Environmental Studies. For example, if the theme was Health, Safety & Nutrition, spelling words for the /ee/ sound might include words like *happy, sneeze, disease, feeling, sick, etc.*

When lesson observations commenced, curriculum knowledge provided background knowledge and enabled meaningful discussions. Being knowledgeable about this and of current trends in spelling methods also supported significant dialogue when teachers referred to other spelling programmes or techniques like THRASS and EGRA.

The case study uncovered the perceptions and beliefs held by the teachers, which in turn helped to evaluate the spelling programme (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A single-case case study method was selected as the research focused on a specific methodology within a specific phase of learning, the Lower Primary Phase, which is regarded as the foundation of all learning (NIED, 2010).

3.3.2. Interpretive paradigm

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) emphasise that interpretive researchers focus on collecting thoughtful qualitative data. The focus of this study was on gaining an understanding of the SRS implementation and the way teacher perceptions affect the teaching of English spelling. The decision to do the research at one school only was based on Bertram and Christiansen's (2014) findings that the interpretive researcher generally selects only one school and a small number of teachers to obtain optimal, in-depth knowledge.

An interpretivist paradigm was chosen for this study because it supports deep immersion in the research context; making meaning of the interaction with teachers and their contexts; engaging in dialogue with teachers, and observing them in their natural life setting while striving to understand how they perceive the SRS as a spelling methodology.

3.4. SELECTION OF TEACHERS AND THE RESEARCH SITE

3.4.1. Teachers

The selected Grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers had undergone SRS training and had developed materials to teach English spelling by employing this method. During the focus group interview, the head of department (HOD) for the Lower Primary Phase grades joined us and contributed to the discussion. She is also an SRS-trained teacher who has implemented the programme in Grade 4. Teacher experience and perceptions of English spelling methods are important to this study; therefore these teachers were regarded as being well informed about the topic. All the teachers had taught English for a number of years. Table 3.1 shows the teachers' demographics.

Table 3.1: Demographics of the teachers

Teacher	Teaching	Qualifications	Age	Experience (years)	Extra training on English spelling	Number of learners in class
B1	Gr. 2	BETD and advanced Diploma in Education	30	8	SRS and THRASS	28
B2	Gr. 3	Higher Diploma in Ed. + BA (Remedial Teaching)	35	10	SRS	28
B3	Gr. 1	BETD	38	13	SRS and EGRA	28
B4	Gr. 4	BETD	32	10	SRS	28

Note: All teachers are female

All the teachers were trained in SRS and two teachers had also had extra training on two different spelling methods, EGRA and THRASS, as can be seen in Table 3.1. All the teachers taught in the Lower Primary Phase.

3.4.2. Research site

As mentioned earlier, qualitative researchers may opt for one school and a few teachers to gain in-depth knowledge about their research topic. Therefore, detailed information on the SRS as

a spelling methodology was obtained from one specific school where the study was conducted. School A was selected because it has applied the specific methodology that this study strove to understand, and also because of its location.

The teachers in the Lower Primary Phase of this school had access to school resources to develop SRS-based teaching material, like worksheets, stories and booklets. The school had also obtained CDs with sound-based stories from the course trainer. These CDs were then used to make booklets for the learners. This specific school had obtained permission from the Directorate of Education to implement SRS, on the understanding that all the prescribed sounds would be covered as set out in the syllabi.

The school in question offers the Namibian National Curriculum to learners from Pre-primary to Grade 12 and is regarded as one of the top performing schools in the Erongo Region. The school is located in the town of Walvis Bay in the Erongo region of Namibia. In Walvis Bay, there are only three schools offering English as First Language in the Lower Phase based on the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum (NIED, 2010) strongly recommends mother tongue instruction in the Lower Primary Phase; however, when schools choose to offer English, the methodologies vary and this school applies the SRS to teach English spelling. Therefore, it was regarded as the most suitable site for learning about the SRS as a spelling methodology.

The national examination results (Gr. 10 and Gr. 12) landed the school a top-ranked position and it is counted among the best in the Erongo region. The school has approximately 350 learners from Pre-primary up to Grade 12. English is taught as First Language and Afrikaans as Second Language. The teacher–pupil ratio is 1:28. It is a well-resourced school and all the teachers from Grades 1 to 5 have had training in how to teach using the SRS. This study is focused on the Lower Primary Phase of this school, which includes Grades 0, 1, 2 and 3. The Grade 0 teacher was not trained in the SRS and did not implement it in the classroom, and therefore was not included in this study. Instead, this teacher followed the National Curriculum and no formal reading, writing and mathematics was taught in this class. The Pre-primary school year for 5/6-year-olds has only become part of Basic Education since 2006 (NIED, 2010). In this study, observations were done only in Grades 1, 2 and 3. However, the HOD for the Lower Primary Phase was included in the focus group interview, because of her experience in SRS teaching. As mentioned earlier, all the teachers purposefully sampled for this research had received SRS training and were therefore able to contribute to the understanding of how SRS is employed as a spelling methodology. At the time of this research, the teachers

participating in this investigation were all teaching in the Lower Primary Phase at the same school. The HOD of the Lower Primary Phase had taught for eight years and was teaching Grade 4 at the time. All teachers had a tertiary qualification in Education, and the average time they had spent teaching in the classroom was close to ten years, thus their perspectives will each be considered in the same manner and given the same analytical weight.

Figure 3.1 below shows the structure of basic education in Namibia, with Grades 0, 1, 2 and 3 forming the foundation for all further learning.

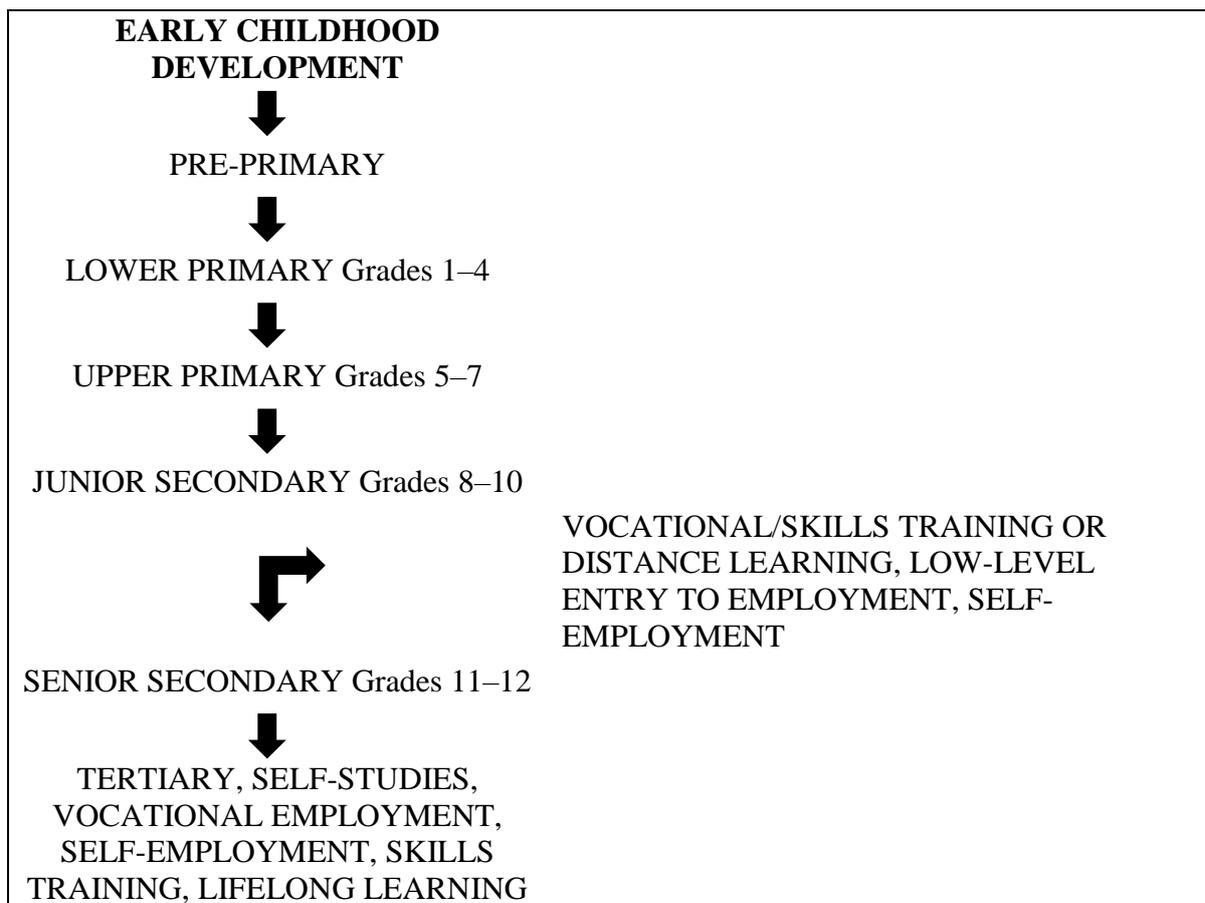


Figure 3.1: The Structure of Basic Education (Adapted from NIED, 2010:3)

In the context of this study, it is important to note that the Pre-primary and Lower Primary phases lay the foundation for all further learning (NIED, 2010), which is why the methodology applied during this phase is regarded as crucial. Thereafter, further training might start at the end of Grade 10 or at the end of Grade 12 and lifelong learning is envisioned. This case study uncovered certain perceptions and beliefs held by the teachers, which in turn helped to evaluate the spelling programme (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

3.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.5.1. Permission

Creswell (2012) states that entry to the field where the research is to take place requires permission from the relevant individuals at all the relevant levels of the relevant institutions. In this case, because it involved entering teachers' classrooms during normal school days, written permission was obtained from the Regional Director of Education in the Erongo region of Namibia (see Appendix E). Thereafter, an appointment was made with the principal of School A and the purpose of the research was explained. After obtaining written permission from the principal (see Appendix F), a meeting with the HOD for the Lower Primary Phase was scheduled. The Grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers were introduced and their consent was also obtained. Agreement was reached on a given time to conduct classroom observations, the document study and the focus interview. A commitment was made to honour the dignity, rights, safety and wellbeing of the teachers. Appointments would be rescheduled if the need arose and text messages would be sent to confirm appointments in advance. Teachers were thanked for their participation, time and openness.

Consent letters were designed for the principal and teachers to sign as an indication of their agreement (see Appendix G). Teachers were encouraged to ask questions if they had any concerns and information regarding this research was shared freely.

3.5.2. Confidentiality and anonymity

Teachers were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time should they feel uncomfortable with it. The teachers' identities were not divulged and it would not be possible for any person reading this study to identify them (Babbie in De Vos et al., 2002). Teachers were given code names such as B1, B2 and B3 for use in the interview transcriptions and in the presentation of the findings. Hence, the right to privacy was ensured.

Data collected from the school and the teachers were stored on a laptop, and treated as confidential documents, which were not available or accessible to anyone. All photocopies of the personal documents were also kept safe and treated as confidential. In this regard, Mouton (2003) states that information given by research participants (in this case, teachers) must be treated as confidential by researchers – this instruction was adhered to. Teachers understood

that the tape-recorded responses would be kept confidential, would be used for the purpose of the study only and would not be disclosed to anyone without their permission.

Other researchers (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Creswell, 2012) also emphasise that it is of the utmost importance that the researcher remain mindful and respectful toward teachers when doing fieldwork. Teachers were treated with respect and professional courtesy: on one occasion a quiet exit was made from the classroom when the principal made an unannounced visit to the class to speak to the teacher and learners about a theft case. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) emphasise that the successful qualitative researcher displays good interpersonal skills. In this regard, an effort was made to maintain good relations, to remain focused on answering the research questions, and to be non-judgemental. Ethics clearance was obtained from the university (see Appendix A) for the duration of the research.

3.6. PILOT STUDY

The pilot study, according to De Vos et al. (2002), forms an essential part of the research process and enables prospective researchers to evaluate their plan before entering the field. In this research, the pilot study was done on a small scale and in an informal way with two primary school teachers. These two teachers taught English in the Senior Primary Phase at the same school selected for the research. The two teachers hold experience and knowledge of SRS as spelling methodology and they were therefore sampled before the actual research started. This was done to test whether the instruments, the document study, observation guide and focus interview guide would indeed elicit relevant data on how the SRS was implemented at this school. Yin (2011) supports the use of pilot studies, stating that they help to check and upgrade one or more aspects of a final investigation such as its design, fieldwork procedures, data collection instruments, or analysis plans.

When the pilot observations were complete, two important factors came to light. For this research, a spelling cycle refers to the period starting from the introduction of a sound until the teacher started with a new sound again. This implies that when more spellings for a sound (like **ow** in **blow**/**oe** in **hoe**/**o-e** in **bone**/ and **ough** in **dough** for the sound /**ow**/) were taught, more time would have to be spent in that class than when only one spelling one sound was taught like /**nk**/. Therefore, observations were done from the start of the new sound until the completion of the spelling cycle when a spelling test was written. Time was spent in each grade to enhance understanding on the way spelling is taught using the SRS.

In addition, some questions in the focus interview guide had to be rephrased to be more specific, for example in the Lesson Introduction:

How did the teacher start the lesson? versus, Has a new sound been introduced? How?

The reason for this adjustment is because a new sound was not introduced during every spelling lesson. Often, lessons were follow-up sessions to the first initial lesson when the new sound was introduced. There was thus a need to cater for this detail in the observation process to understand how SRS-based spelling was taught. Table 3.2 lists the questions in the observation guide.

Table 3.2: Observation guide

Grade observed:	Observations
1. Lesson introduction:	
Has a new sound been introduced? How?	
Did learners say and copy the sound?	
Did learners actively take part in the lesson? Describe learner activity.	
2. Content:	
Were learners able to answer the questions/do the required activity?	
Did the learners sound out the words individually/in groups/in pairs before writing it down?	
3. Skill application:	
How did learners apply the skill taught?	
4. Teaching aids:	
What aids were used?	
5. Evaluation	
How did learners fare in the application of the skills taught? Were they able to do the activities? What ensures differentiation?	
6. End of the week/cycle- observations	
How was SRS material, e.g. stories/worksheets incorporated in the lessons?	
Did the learners have ample opportunity to apply/transfer the skill acquired?	
Is there continuity toward the next grade? Do they repeat the same sounds in the next grade?	
7. Visual stimuli in classroom	
Is the classroom a print-rich environment? Are there posters, words or labelled pictures against the walls? Reading corner, spelling games?	

The questions in Table 3.2 guided the observation process and also required that the learners' books be read in order to answer all the questions.

Thereafter, a guide was compiled for the pilot document analysis. The questions pertaining to this guide are shown in Table 3.3

Table 3.3: Document analysis guide

Questions	Answers
1. Were the majority of the learners able to complete the given activities successfully?	
2. Do the spelling test scores look good, average or poor?	
3. Are the learner activities parallel to the common goals of the revised curriculum?	
4. What other techniques were applied to help learners to develop their spelling skills?	
5. What are the language goals as set out in the curriculum for the Lower Primary Phase?	
6. How do the timetable and allocation of periods impact the teaching of spelling?	

The pilot interview also highlighted the need to distinguish between teachers when listening to the interview afterwards. To address this issue, number cards were handed out and each participant said their number before responding.

Lastly, the pilot study also resulted in the adjustment of the interview guide questions as set out below.

1. Describe how you feel about English spelling and the teaching thereof. How many periods of English are in a week/cycle? How many are allocated to spelling?
2. In your opinion, what are the advantages to using the Sound Reading System over traditional spelling methods? How did SRS training impact your own approach?
3. In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of using the Sound Reading System over traditional spelling methods?
4. Do you experience the Sound Reading System as methodology that enhances reading, writing, and spelling success? How so?
5. Please give examples of how learners transfer their new skills in other areas of writing and reading?
6. What opportunities are provided for practical application of the new skill?

7. Do you use any other resources besides the Sound Reading System materials? Elaborate please.
8. Which orthographic assessment(s) are you administering to measure student progress in spelling? How often are these administered? Is it different from how you approached it before SRS? How?
9. Did you have to adjust some aspects of the Sound Reading System (which was developed in England) to make it relevant for Namibia or is it a perfect fit?
10. How do you teach sight words? Is your current approach different from how you taught it before using the SRS approach?
11. Would you change anything about the programme and what would it be?

As mentioned earlier (see Appendix H), the interview guide questions were adjusted to ensure that they elicited the desired information. Asking whether learners had an opportunity to apply their newly obtained skill produced either a 'yes' or 'no' answer. However, asking for an example of how learners had applied their newly acquired skill warranted a more detailed answer. It also became evident that if teachers had to reflect on their approach before SRS training and how the training had moulded their current approach, questions had to be formulated appropriately.

A pilot study incorporates the personal experience of the researcher with the social setting in which the research is intended to transpire (De Vos et al., 2002). Being able to observe and perceive the undercurrents in the school community helped to eliminate possible problems and adjust the research plan accordingly, such as obtaining practical knowledge about the school timetable and teacher schedules. This led to the researcher determining that ten periods were allocated to English in the Lower Primary Phase, which in turn helped to streamline the questions in the focus interview guide, particularly the first question. The pilot study also brought to light that the school closed earlier on Wednesdays owing to the scheduled staff meetings, which meant that learners went home earlier. This provided extra time to pursue the document study. Being able to obtain a school timetable during the pilot study made planning easier and understanding that spending equal time in each grade was not essential helped in discussing the observation schedules with teachers and brought about an understanding of the intention of observations. Understanding the intention of observations in turn strengthened participant cooperation and openness. The school timetable provided valuable information such as on which days the Lower Primary visited the library or had sport, which enabled

effective planning and time management. The aim was to cause no interference in the daily running of the school, but to simply join them.

3.7. SAMPLING

According to De Vos et al. (2002), in a case study the sampling process is purposive rather than random. The school was purposefully selected because it had implemented the SRS and was ideally located. Moreover, the teachers were included in this sample because they were trained and knowledgeable, had experience of the implementation process, had developed materials to support their SRS teaching and could provide meaningful information about their experiences in teaching English spelling.

As mentioned earlier, the school on which this case study was based had obtained special permission from the Directorate of Education to employ the SRS in teaching English spelling. The teachers selected for the study used the SRS in their classrooms and shared valuable first-hand experience that enabled me to understand the implementation of SRS in the Lower Primary Phase.

3.8. PROCEDURE FOR ENTERING THE RESEARCH FIELD AND CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

To obtain access to the selected school, permission was obtained from the Regional Director of Education, the principal, the HOD and the Grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers.

Before entering the field, extensive literature was consulted on spelling methodologies and the latest trends in classroom practice. Documents such as the newly revised curriculum for the Lower Primary Phase as well as the Planning Manuals for Grades 1, 2 and 3 were accessed.

To obtain a better understanding of how the SRS was implemented as a spelling methodology, non-participant observation was carried out in each class group. Lessons were observed and documented, field notes were written up at the end of the school day and reflective notes made at the end of each day in the field. Observations were regarded as complete when new phonic sounds/new spelling words had been introduced and after an assessment had been done. Therefore, observation in each grade occurred throughout a spelling cycle (start of new sound/spelling) so as to witness all the activities applied during that period and the way they differed from grade to grade. Observations were discussed and checked with the teachers.

A systematic document study was done: formal documents such as the National Curriculum, the syllabi and the manuals were scrutinised as well as personal documents such as the learners' spelling books and test books. In scrutinising these books, it could be determined how well the learners could spell and the language goals for the Lower Primary were established. The spelling tests revealed whether spelling had been taught successfully and learners' written work offered insights into the approach taken to spelling in all three grades. The document study was guided by the pre-formulated questions in Table 3.3. The subsequent findings were discussed and checked with the teachers.

As mentioned earlier, focus group interviewing was applied as a method for obtaining data to answer the research question. In a group, the teachers could describe what was meaningful or important to them using their own words rather than being restricted to predetermined categories. In addition, feelings of being overwhelmed, awkwardness and reluctance are minimised when in the company of familiar people. The focus group interview enabled me, as a single researcher working on my own, to gain valuable data and manage time effectively.

Teachers were comfortable expressing their views in the group they worked with every day. The interview was audio taped and field notes were written up during and after the interview.

The teacher participants were supplied with number cards to remind them (with a nod, and no audible interruption) to say their code names every time they responded. This helped to distinguish the different participant voices for transcription purposes. Afterwards transcriptions were read and reflective notes were made about the interview. Each participant received a copy of the interview transcription to confirm whether they agreed with the content.

3.9. DATA COLLECTION

Data collection included a document study, observation and a focus interview on how the SRS is employed as a spelling methodology in the Lower Primary Phase. These methods were rooted in Yin's (2011) claim that information gathering in qualitative research is embedded in our actions in the research field.

3.9.1. Document analysis

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), existing documents can be a valuable source of data, therefore the National Curriculum (2010), the newly revised English syllabi (NIED, 2015), the Integrated Planning Manual for Grades 1, 2 and 3 (NIED, 2015) and learners' books

(notebooks and test books) guided the research. The document study thus included informal documents such as the learner notebooks and formal documents such as the existing documents just mentioned.

Yin (2011) states that like interviews, field notes relating to the document study should always be detailed and should be a true reflection of the information recorded in the documents. Therefore, field notes were accurately recorded and shared with all the teachers to check their accuracy. Information linked to the SRS spelling methodology was obtained from the learners' books, for example the order of sounds and the level of learners' spelling skills. In addition, the revised curriculum and manuals were searched for themes and patterns relating to the research on spelling. Emerging themes included SRS lessons, curriculum knowledge and implementation, spelling and reading, and teacher perceptions and methodologies.

Yin (2011) cautions that it is better to tackle the documents with the attitude of them being a single source of data, to ensure that the analysis is done meticulously. Copies were made of some information (e.g. the sound spellings that learners had to master in each grade for the first two terms based on the syllabi on the one hand, and the sound spellings taught in the SRS over the same time span, on the other, to determine the correspondence if any). Copies were also made of some weekly activities (of a Grade 1 learner) in the workbook for further reflection (see Appendix M). And finally, reflective notes were made after scrutinising each document (curriculum, syllabi, manuals and books) thoroughly. Then a summary is presented in the form of a table in Appendix L about the new curricular requirements regarding English.

These following are the sounds that Grade 1 learners should learn, as set out in the Integrated Planning Manual for the first term of the year.

1. Explore the letter 's' and the sound /s/ + Phonological Awareness
2. Explore the letter 'a' and the sound /a/ Point out it is a vowel and explain
3. Explore the letter 't' and the sound /t/ + Phonological Awareness
4. Explore the letter 'p' and the sound /p/ + Phonological Awareness
5. Explore the letter 'n' and the sound /n/ + Phonological Awareness
6. Revise s, t, p, & n + more exploration of a + Phonological Awareness
7. Explore the letter 'c' and the sound /c/ + Phonological Awareness
8. Explore the letter 'm' and the sound /m/ + Phonological Awareness
9. Explore the letter 'e' and the sound /e/ Point out it is another vowel

10. Explore the letter 'h' and the sound /h/ + Phonological Awareness
11. Explore the letter 'r' and the sound /r/ + Phonological Awareness

The SRS progression of sounds for term 1 is listed as follows:

t o p m a n
c d i
g b
u s
e
h w
r j k
f l v y z

“The teacher has to exercise professional discretion in deciding when it is best to convey content directly” (National Curriculum, 2010:26).

Sight words to be taught in Grade 1 include the following:

the to and a I you it in said for up look is go we little down can see not one my me
big come blue red where jump away here help make yellow two play run find three
funny
he was that she on they but at with all there out be have am do did what so get like
this will yes went are now no came ride into good want too pretty four saw well
ran brown eat who new must black white soon our ate say under please

The Integrated Planning Manual suggests that phonics progression (order of introducing letters and letter sounds) and handwriting progression should be closely linked to phonics. The teacher may choose to have letter formation practised at the same time as sounds are studied in phonics (see Appendix L). Sight words, regarded as the most commonly used words in a language (see Appendix I for a complete list of the sight words to be taught in the Lower Primary Phase), are introduced according to frequency and must be taught explicitly, although the teacher may adapt the order in which they are taught (Integrated Planning Manual, 2014).

3.9.2. Observations

In this study, observation was applied as a data collection technique to gain a better understanding of how the SRS is applied in the Grade 1, 2 and 3 classrooms. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) state that observational research takes place in a natural context and that the researcher hopes to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon through the observation process.

Teachers were observed in their natural setting, that is, their classrooms. About two months were spent in each classroom, observing how English spelling was taught. An observation guide (see Table 3.2) was used and comprehensive field notes were written during the lessons. Detailed, non-judgemental concrete descriptions of what was observed were written down and reflected on. Researchers Yin (2011) and McMillan and Schumacher (2010) emphasise the importance of not delaying the process of writing up field notes.

Observations were done in all three grades. Creswell (2012) identifies three observational roles: as a participant observer when the researcher actively participates in the activities in the setting they observe, as a nonparticipant observer when the researcher observes without becoming involved in the activities, and as a changing observational role when the role is adapted and is neither participatory nor non-participatory. As a nonparticipant observer, no participation in any activities take place, which was the role adopted in this research.

The observation schedule focused on the layout of the SRS lesson and the implementation of the programme in a whole-class setting, although the programme was initially designed for one-on-one instruction.

Ten periods are allocated to English each week, during which all aspects of English teaching should occur – Listening and Responding, Speaking and Communicating, Reading and Viewing, Writing, Language Structure, Grammar and Language Use. These are the skill areas as set out in the syllabus (NIED, 2014). Spelling is listed as a competency under Grammar and Language Use. The spelling cycle in this investigation differed from one grade to the next, lasting for a whole week in Grades 1 and 2, and two weeks for one sound having multiple spellings in Grade 3. One period lasted 40 minutes and each teacher approached spelling time differently. One teacher used only a Monday specifically for spelling and the rest of the eight periods included spelling activities which she explained well, but the focus was on other work like reading and writing. Another teacher used the first 10 minutes of every day for spelling

after starting with the new sound on the Monday. The observations of all three grades were carried out over a period of two months.

3.9.3. Focus group interview

Yin (2011) states that, in a focus group interview, the group is regarded as focused because the teachers (in this case) had a common experience. A focus group interview with the three teachers and their HOD was thus scheduled to obtain a detailed picture of participant beliefs, perceptions and accounts of SRS as a spelling methodology (De Vos et al., 2002). Careful not to interfere with the normal school programme, the researcher held the interview with the teachers after school. An interview guide was employed to assist the researcher in the focusing questions and collecting the relevant data, and a voice recorder was used to record the interview. The recording was transcribed later.

All the Grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers had implemented the SRS and could provide useful information pertaining to my research questions. At the beginning of the focus interview, the purpose was explained and complete anonymity was assured. Teachers were encouraged to both take part in the discussions and to listen to each other. The interview was transcribed and reflective notes were written.

Conducting a focus interview requires good interpersonal skills (Yin, 2011) to ensure all teachers have an equal opportunity to express themselves while also ensuring that the conversation remains on course. However, several challenges were experienced which are described below.

One participant was shy and had to be encouraged to respond while another participant steered the conversation towards the demands of the new syllabus. Polite and firm responses helped to keep the discussions focused on the research topic (see Appendix K, the transcription of the interview). In addition to keeping the focus on the topic, clarity was needed to understand a statement made by one of the teachers. The following response was given to the question of whether this programme could be regarded as suitable for Namibia: “Some stories are really foreign ...” When requested to elaborate, the participant explained that in the SRS stories there is often reference to having “tea” which includes eating bread with jam or cream. In response to how she dealt with this she explained that in England people often describe having a light meal as having “tea”. After googling it, it was evident that whereas *tea* generally means a hot drink in Namibia, in England tea has another connotation. There, afternoon tea suggests a light

meal and 'high tea' actually refers to an early dinner. The teachers found this information very interesting.

Another participant mentioned that in England they pronounce *wash* as *wosh* and *wasp* and *wosp* and therefore these words were listed as written with /a/ and read as /o/. After she was asked to elaborate the teacher explained that in the Namibian context *wash* is pronounced *wash* with /a/ and therefore it was taught as *wash* with /a/ sound. This was the only worksheet that was not used in accordance with the SRS materials so as to suit it to the Namibian context.

3.10. DATA ANALYSIS

De Vos et al. (2002) define data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. In an attempt to bring order and structure to this research, Yin's (2011) five-phase cycle was employed. This involves five steps: 1) compiling, 2) disassembling, 3) reassembling and arraying, 4) interpreting and 5) concluding. It is a cyclical process, which starts with *compiling* all the data collected according to type (interview, document study and observation) and storing it in an electronic file. This formed the database containing all the data that was collected. The second step, *disassembling*, is sometimes referred to as data reduction or fracturing. During this process, the database was searched for similarities and dissimilarities which were sorted accordingly. Text was reduced to segments of information (short sentences) and labelled with descriptive code words, such as 'lesson detail', 'adjustments', 'strengths and weaknesses', 'knowledge of curriculum', 'knowledge of English orthography' and 'teacher perceptions', using the computer software QDA Miner Lite. From these codes themes were developed, which this study focused on to determine how the SRS was implemented and what adjustments were made during its implementation in the classrooms.

The aim of the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data is to discover patterns, ideas, explanations and understandings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Therefore, to make sense of it the collected data were scanned for patterns and ideas. Emerging categories included 'SRS', 'Curriculum' and 'English'.

The next step, *reassembling data*, required that ideas be examined and the emerging patterns questioned. The three methods endorsed by Yin (2011), namely, *constant comparison*, *rival thinking* and looking out for *negative instances*, were applied and emerging themes were checked again. The categorisation of certain data and why they were regarded as similar or not

were assessed, such as why teacher perception was seen as being dissimilar to challenges, while it could very well have been a challenge.

Interpretation is the stage in this process where meaning is developed from the data obtained. A thematic approach was applied and themes were generated by reducing the initial list of codes to fewer categories and codes that would enable a comprehensive description of how the SRS was applied as a spelling methodology in the Lower Primary Phase. Making meaning of the data collected refers to, for example, the teaching of sight words or high frequency words which were perceived to be a problem area, as mentioned earlier. The teachers implementing the SRS who participated in this study had taught learners the English alphabet code and regarded sight words or high frequency words as ordinary words that children can learn to spell and read if they are taught the within their sound group if possible. Prior to being trained in the use of the SRS these same teachers applied one other method only, the whole-word method, to teach all sight words. Explicit knowledge of the English alphabet code form part of the SRS training and of an SRS lesson. Seven words with tricky spellings are identified which must be taught as whole words, according to Nevola (2007): *the, who, one, once, two, are, eye*. The teachers in this study were, however, convinced that if they could help learners to remember sight words, any method would do.

The final phase of data analysis is *concluding*, which involves demonstrating the significance of this study to teacher training centres, principals, curriculum designers, NIED and the Ministry of Education with regard to the implementation English spelling methodologies in the Lower Primary Phase. Hence, it is essential to acknowledge that teacher perception of spelling plays an important role in how it is approached. The effect of perception on spelling started with how much time was allocated to spelling, what time of the day was chosen, how learner workbooks were set out, how the teaching of other competencies takes precedence over spelling competence, how much opportunity is provided to practise new skills and how much significance is given to spelling as one part of language study. Leaving such an essential foundation skill to the “teacher’s professional discretion”, as proposed by the Manual, might leave too big a gap for possible mishaps.

3.11. TRIANGULATION

Triangulation is the research process by which evidence is corroborated by various individuals or methods of data collection (Creswell, 2012). A multi-method approach (observation,

document study and interview) to collecting data thus helped to verify what was assumed in one document against other information. What was observed in the classroom was validated by cross-checking data found in the learners' books and test books. Johnson and Christensen (2011), describes triangulation as the term given when the researcher seeks convergence and corroboration of results from different methods studying the same phenomenon. Every data source has its strengths and weaknesses, and by using triangulation the strengths of one procedure can compensate for the weaknesses of another approach. During the observation process, it was impossible to observe the continuation of teaching SRS spelling in the following grade because it would have meant being present at the end of Grade 2 and at the beginning of Grade 3. However, the learners' books and the focus group interview provided information about which sound Grade 2 and 3 started with and the year plans supplied valuable information that indicated dialogue between the junior primary teachers. Dialogue with regard to the progression of sounds. Moreover, informal conversation and feedback on field notes ensured clarity and accuracy. The focus interview also provided the insights needed from the teachers regarding the challenges they experienced in implementing this methodology. As this research was conducted in a school, interaction with the teachers was possible to gather relevant information such how the teachers deal with the requirements of the newly revised curriculum while also following the systematic order of SRS sounds. In addition, as already described, following the focus interview each participant received a copy of the transcription to check for accuracy, and they were asked to read the document study descriptions and the classroom observations to check whether they were an honest portrayal of what had transpired. Triangulation is used to increase the trustworthiness of a research finding.

3.12. TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is a concept adapted and promoted by Lincoln and Guba (in Maykut & Morehouse ,1995), as the prototypical basis for evaluating qualitative research. Methods such as observation and interviews are typical of the interpretive paradigm, which implies that the study is context-bound and that an effort was made to portray that context accurately. The foundations of trustworthiness are credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. These are discussed below.

3.12.1. Credibility

De Vos et al. (2002) state that the credibility of a study lies in demonstrating that the subject was truthfully described. Credibility is defined as the sureness that can be placed in the truth

of the research conclusions (Anney, 2014). Data obtained from the focus group interview, observation, and other multimethod strategies such as field notes and informal conversations revealed that although teachers hold the SRS methodology in high esteem, they do tend to revert to whole-word methods to tackle difficult words, especially those perceived as sight words.

In order to increase the credibility of this study, field notes on the document study and the observations were written up in two ways. Firstly, as descriptive notes, providing an account of what had been experienced in the field and, secondly, as reflective notes. The latter encompassed thinking about the experience and how it could boost understanding of the way English spelling was perceived and taught in the Lower Primary Phase.

3.12.2. Dependability

Anney (2014) refers to Bitsch's definition of dependability as the stability of findings over a period of time and De Vos et al. (2002) regard it as the alternative for reliability. In this study, data was verified by checking information obtained after interviewing participants, doing observations and checking informal documents like learner books and formal documents like the national curriculum, syllabi and manuals. Learner activities were compared to the data obtained in interviews and other documents. Appendix M includes examples where handwriting was integrated with the sound taught at the time, therefore in line with the curricular requirements.

3.12.3. Transferability

De Vos et al. (2002) regard transferability as generalisability of the findings. According to Anney (2014) transferability refers to the extent to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents. Transferability of findings in this research are enabled by purposive sampling, however it would rest on the researcher who would attempt such transfer to demonstrate the applicability of these findings to another research setting. It is important to bear in mind that qualitative research is embedded in a real-life setting which must be entered to gain an understanding of the participant's perspective. In order to validate the findings of this study, probing questions were asked to obtain detailed responses. For example: "Describe how you teach sight words. Does your current approach differ from what you did before SRS?" These responses were compared to what was written in the learner books and to what had transpired in the classrooms. For example, according to the

teachers, sight words or high frequency words were taught as normal words (learners had to be taught how to code and decode them correctly). However, one participant mentioned later that some sight words should be taught as whole words as “there is no other way”. This was also seen during the classroom observations. The teacher presented sight words to the learners on a flash card, which is not in line with the SRS philosophy. This implied that teachers resorted to whole-word teaching, which is not usually promoted by the proponents of phonics teaching. The SRS is a systematic phonics instruction programme, therefore this exception to the rule (of segmenting/blending which is the heartbeat of SRS) highlights it as a problem area for teachers. This will be discussed later in this document.

The multiple sources of data thus included the exploration of the teacher perceptions; reflective notes taken after the observations; informal discussions between teachers and researcher; learners’ work and the focus group interview with the teachers and their HOD. These all contributed to the triangulation of data which in turn enhanced the transferability of the research as suggested in De Vos et al. (2002).

3.12.4. Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the research findings could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Anney, 2014). All the information collected during this research was discussed and checked with teachers to eliminate any misunderstanding. The purpose of the document study was to corroborate and confirm the data relating to the teachers’ approaches to teaching spelling. Teachers provided the information that there were ten periods allocated to English, and this was confirmed as it was stipulated in the syllabi and manuals that were scrutinised. Furthermore, it came to light (during the interview) that teachers who apply the SRS have to compile their own schemes of work although the Integrated Planning Manuals provide year plans and schemes of work for teachers who follow the governmental guide. This extra work expected from those who chose to implement SRS validates the finding that SRS as a spelling method is perceived as ‘a lot of work’. The authenticity of findings was supported by collecting data through various methods and checking field notes, transcriptions and observation reports with the teachers to eliminate misinterpretations.

3.13. SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the research design and the research methodology considered when conducting the research, which were directed by the research questions within the framework

of an interpretative paradigm. Data collection strategies, namely, observation, document study and the focus interview, were discussed. The importance of triangulation was highlighted as a way of verifying what was said in one document by other information gathering methods. This chapter explained the trustworthiness of this study on the teaching of English spelling as well as outlining the research ethics considered.

The next chapter will present and describe the research results, with a particular focus on the interpretation and discussion of the findings of teacher perceptions on the teaching of English spelling, and the way the SRS was adapted for use as a spelling methodology in the Lower Primary Phase in Namibia.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. INTRODUCTION AND PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The interpretation and analysis of the data that accrued from the observations, interviews and document study are presented and discussed according to the two research questions, which are re-stated below. Firstly, observations in Grades 1, 2 and 3 will be presented in tabular form. This is followed by a discussion of the interview findings and the document analysis. Observations were done from the introduction of a new sound until the next sound was presented. Therefore, observations were done for two weeks each in Grades 1 and 2, but three weeks for Grade 3 because the Grade 3 teacher had multiple spellings to teach. The teachers followed an integrated approach which meant that the lessons observed included other skill areas such as grammar and language. The research questions are as follows:

What are the benefits and limitations of teaching spelling by applying the Sound Reading System?

What adjustments, if any, did teachers make to ensure that the Sound Reading System as a spelling programme is indeed appropriate for Namibia?

4.2. RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

**What are the benefits and limitations of teaching
spelling by applying the sound reading system?**

To answer this question, observations were carried out and the findings relating to these will be discussed and presented in tabular format. Thereafter the document analysis undertaken and the focus interview conducted are discussed to corroborate findings. To ensure clarity, all sounds will be written within slashes, for example /ee/ and spellings will be written in bold within a word or on its own, e.g. /ee/ in **tree**, or **happy**. When reference is made to words, such words will be written in italics.

4.2.1. Results of observations

4.2.1.1. Overview of SRS spelling lessons in Grade 1

This section describes the observations of the SRS spelling lessons in Grade 1 with an emphasis on learner participation, skill transfer and extent to which the teacher displayed knowledge of the English Alphabet Code. Thereafter the lessons as observed during the first week are presented in tabular form. The observation guide followed to obtain the data is presented below. See Appendix J for more detail on the observations.

In Grade 1, the teacher focused on teaching the sounds **t, o, p, m, a, n** first. These sounds are referred to as step 1 of the Foundation Stage in SRS. From these sounds or letters a list of words are created which make up the spelling list:

tap man top ant tap mop pan tan am at on

The observed lessons focused on the sound /i/ of the Foundation Stage. Support materials used during the SRS lessons observed included worksheets based on the focus sound and a sound story to practise reading the focus sound words in text. The teacher (B1) made a visible effort to make clean sounds, clearly articulating each sound and constantly encouraging the learners to do so as well. For example, she kept on encouraging learners to “open your mouth and say *a* for “*apple*” not like *e* for “*egg*”.

The classroom was a print-rich environment, containing many colourful posters, worksheets and books relating to the current theme. Posters included labelled pictures of different occupations/communication to blend in with the theme (social environment). There was also a reading corner with books on display about different jobs and foundation stage word puzzles in plastic pockets were available for word building practice. The alphabet cards (as required by the Directorate of Education) were displayed above the board with a colourful picture for each letter and the teacher referred to those specific examples all the time; for example, A for apple, E for egg, I for ink, O for ostrich, and U for umbrella. Sometimes, the learners completed her sentence midway and it was clear that they had heard it numerous times. The vowels were highlighted and the colourful display was sure to draw learner attention. It was evident that the learners had been introduced to the word **I** at an earlier stage because the teacher kept on referring to “remember this special word ... **I**” as she pointed with her finger to herself, and the learners imitated this movement.

SRS stories were typed and a booklet was handed out to each learner. This contained all the Foundation stories (featuring the focus sounds) of the SRS. During the second week SRS worksheets were handed out – one copy to each learner – and they had to spot the **i**-words and circle them. This is called a sound spot activity. Then they had to sort these into /i/ as in *sit* and /i/ as in *in*. This is called sound a sound sort activity. Then the stories were read out loud, first by the teacher then in groups and individually. Table 4.1 below gives an overview of the first week’s spelling lessons as observed in Grade 1.

Table 4.1: Overview of SRS spelling lessons observed in Grade 1 (first week only)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>A new sound /i/ was introduced and written on the board. T: “We are learning about the i-sound today”.</p> <p>Learners say the sound and give words starting with the i-sound.</p> <p>Then the teacher explains that i can be like i in I or i in in or i in pin.</p> <p>Learners say the word – in, I, sit as teacher shows the flashcards.</p> <p>Teacher: How many sounds can you hear in pin? Teacher used sound lines. Let us sound the word pin.</p> <p>Learners: p-i-n (as teacher writes each letter on the sound line), matching each sound to the correct letter. This lesson was mostly oral and in the end learners had to write words on sound lines on a worksheet. These were the spelling list words to be learnt at home.</p>	<p>Teacher placed three letter tiles randomly on the board. Who can build the word pin on the board?</p> <p>It was completed correctly. The teacher also asked the learners to say the first sound, the last sound and to replace the i with o (a sound they have learnt before) to practise manipulation of sounds orally.</p> <p>Worksheets were handed out to unscramble letters and write picture words down at home.</p> <p>Integration of grammar – plurals.</p>	<p>Teacher drew three sound lines and asked who could sound the word “mad”. More words followed.</p> <p>This activity was done orally and the teacher wrote on the board.</p> <p>The class was divided into three groups (each having a specific activity to do like handwriting and tracing in group 1, group 2 had to write out sounds on the sound lines and the third group had carpet time and were building words with letter tiles).</p> <p>On the carpet, it was oral work; answer questions like “how many sounds can you hear? What is the first sound, the last sound, the middle sound, replace it with o or segment and blend, circle correct word for each picture.</p> <p>Integration of grammar and handwriting.</p>	<p>Worksheets were handed out; learners were required to circle all the pictures containing i.</p> <p>There was also much emphasis on matching the sound to the letter and they had to complete a worksheet which had only pictures and sound lines without letters.</p> <p>Learners traced patterns and words as follow-up activities.</p> <p>After adding the sounds <i>c</i> and <i>d</i>, a list of words to practise at home was handed out: <i>cat cot pin Tim dot dip nap nip in (extra attention given to in because the i is pronounced differently than i in pin.</i></p>	<p>Spelling test was written based on the Monday list. The test required learners to look at the picture (e.g. a pig) and write the word on the sound lines (_ _ _) as the teacher read it.</p> <p>Learners made a hand movement and said (switch) every time they referred to the sound changing but the letter remaining the same. This signalled the possibility that this letter may have represented different sounds.</p> <p>Learners understand that sounds may change although the letter is the same. When they learnt about /o/, the learners wanted to know if ‘old’ is also spelt with an /o/. The teacher explained that the letter /o /can represent o in pot and o in old.</p> <p>Integration with grammar.</p>

Table 4.1 summarises the observations made during the first week in the Grade 1 class. It shows that an integrated approach was followed. This is in line with the holistic teaching endorsed by the Ministry of Education. However, the duration of lessons varied, as the teacher followed a flexible timetable which will be discussed later in this document. Two periods a day were allocated to English and teacher B1 used 15 to 20 minutes every day to teach spelling. On occasion, owing to time constraints, activities were handed out as homework after instructions had been given. For the purposes of this study, such activities were regarded as part of the SRS implementation.

The teacher seemed to be very aware of the fact that the learners needed to look at her when introducing the new sound. She encouraged those who did not with a “Look at me, John ... Sarah ...” There was also much emphasis on matching the sound to the letter – the process where each letter represents a specific sound. Learners seemed confident and quite familiar with this approach, as if they knew what to expect. The teacher explained later that the SRS is a worked-out plan that the teacher executes. The same steps are used to consolidate skills like segmenting and blending.

During the second week, after the spelling test had been written, a story was read which consisted of the newly acquired words. Every learner had a copy of that story. All the difficult words were circled and sounded out, and then learners attempted to read them. The teacher also explained what they meant and learners were given an opportunity to build their own sentences with them. The learners also had to practise this at home. The teacher explained to me that there was a clear understanding among learners which was explained during previous lessons that sounds may change although the letter is the same. To indicate that a sound might have to change learners used a hand turn movement. This switch movement signals the switch to another possible sound for that same spelling, for example /i/ in **in** and in **sit**.

Learners had adequate opportunity to practise the new sound. Classroom-based activities as well as homework activities were handed out. SRS worksheets were handed out and SRS stories were used, in this case learners read *A pig sat in a pig pen*, to practice the sound /i/. But teacher- created worksheets were also used.

The teacher also read parts of the story out loud as dictation which learners marked and corrected by themselves afterwards when she wrote it on the board. This was done after the

sound was well taught. The last activity for the sound /i/ was a picture crossword created by the teacher, which the children seemed to enjoy.

In the next grade, Grade 2, some sounds are repeated as revision and the teacher continues with the next sound according to the systematic arrangement of the SRS sounds.

4.2.1.2. Overview of SRS spelling lessons in Grade 2

This section describes the observations of the SRS spelling lessons in Grade 2 with an emphasis on learner participation, skills transfer and the teacher's display of knowledge of the English Alphabet Code. Thereafter, a summary of the lessons observed during the first week is presented in tabular form. The observation guide was followed to obtain the data as presented below (see Appendix J).

In Grade 2, the teacher continued to teach sounds according to the SRS as set out in Stage 1. At this stage of SRS implementation, some sounds that were taught in the Foundation Stage are repeated here together with their multiple spellings, for example /e/ as **e**, **ea**, and **ai** as in **pet**, **head** **said**. Only a controlled number of the most common spellings are taught, because the SRS is based on the incremental introduction of sounds.

The lessons observed during the two weeks in Grade 2 were based on the /th/ sound. Teacher B2 introduced the new sound on Monday and used two periods to practise segmenting and blending while monitoring whether everybody was sounding out as they wrote the list of words on the worksheet. Then a spelling list was compiled for the Friday test. The follow-up lessons during the rest of the week were shorter than the introductory lesson and some of the activities were done at home. The crossword puzzle and the word search that the teacher handed out was not part of the SRS materials, but activities that she had created using the Internet. The Friday test was based on the Monday list and the teacher read out the word, used it in a sentence and read it out aloud again. Part of the sound-story was used for dictation. The learners wrote the words and dictation down and handed them in for marking. The teacher explained that she used dictation more as a consolidation exercise than as a testing exercise. Thereafter, the teacher engaged all the learners in a rhyming exercise. This classroom was a print-rich environment, and with many colourful posters, worksheets and books relating to the current theme (social environment). Posters showed illustrated instructions for healthy habits (like 'wash your hand before you eat'), nouns, verbs and colourful homophones. Some rhymes written by learners

were also displayed on the classroom walls (e.g. When I feel down, I go to town, I see the birds, I hear their chirps, and after a while, I start to smile).

The lessons observed during the first week of Grade 2 are summarised in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Overview of SRS spelling lessons observed in Grade 2 (first week only)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>A new sound was introduced /th/ thus showing the code characteristic that two letters are used for one sound. T: How many sounds can you hear in the word <i>then</i>? Teacher then writes sound lines on the board like this: _____</p> <p>And write down the letters <i>e th n</i> for learners to unscramble it.</p> <p>Teacher: <i>th</i> is one sound with 2 letters. Sound the word, <i>thug</i> and count the sounds.</p> <p>L: th- u- g</p> <p>Worksheet 1 required learners to sound out the word and copy it on the sound line.</p> <p>A spelling list was compiled for the Friday test.</p>	<p>Teacher handed out Worksheet 2 which required the learners to look at a word list and then label each picture with the most suitable words from the list, e.g. a picture of a robber = thug.</p> <p>Most of the learners could complete the tasks independently, only a few needed to be encouraged to complete the worksheet.</p>	<p>Learners had to search for the <i>th</i> – spellings in the SRS story and list them. Of these words three were chosen to build sentences.</p> <p>Dictionary work – homework <i>thesaurus, therapy thermometer</i> – everybody had to find the meaning.</p>	<p>Learners completed a <i>th</i> crossword puzzle with picture clues. Adding -ing.</p> <p>SRS worksheets about adding -ing are completed.</p> <p>Teacher explains when to double the last letter like in swim – swimming, but think – thinking.</p>	<p>The spelling test and dictation were written.</p> <p>Thereafter the teacher used rhymes to bring understanding and awareness of spelling to the learners. She used: I sat on my <i>bed</i>, and scratched my <i>head</i>. Oh, what will I <i>do</i> without my missing <i>shoe</i>?</p> <p>These words sound the same but the spellings are different and the teacher used her knowledge to highlight these differences for the learners. She would write out rhymes like the above and ask learners to spot the spellings for a specific sound that rhymes with another.</p>

From Table 4.2 the integration with other language skills can be seen. Extension of vocabulary with the dictionary work and the SRS worksheet on adding a suffix (-ing) are examples of this integration. The teacher made an effort to involve specific learners and this created anticipation that their name could be called out at any moment and it would be best to listen. Learners had adequate exercises to practise their new skill. Classroom-based activities as well as homework. SRS worksheets (sound spot and sound sort) were handed out and SRS stories were used, in this case, a story about a moth was used to practice the /th/ sound. The teacher integrated the spelling with grammar, homophones such as their, there and they're. The SRS worksheet on

the homophones was used for all learners and an extra worksheet created by the teacher to revise both /th/ and /sh/ sounds in one activity was handed out as a challenge to some learners. For learners who seemed to take longer to complete an activity worksheets were printed in bigger font and contained fewer questions.

Teacher B2 engaged in a combination of whole class teaching and small group teaching, and it was clear that she was very comfortable with the alphabetic code. Activities were done in small groups. She would ask learners for the spellings of /k/ and then advised them to write it down before she started with dictation. She also encouraged the use of key words like /k/ in **cat** and /k/ in **kick** and /k/ in **rock**. The teacher taught spelling through code breaking, for example words to code break is kick, clock, cats. She then modelled the code breaking for kick = k + i + ck, providing three sound lines and emphasising that the /k/ sound can be represented with three spellings **c**, **k** and **ck**. When one girl mentioned that her name, Chloe, also started with /k/ the teacher confirmed it to be an alternative spelling for /k/ like in words such as **Chloe**, **Charl** and **choir**. The teacher also explained that sometimes the same spelling has more than one sound, e.g. /ch/ in **chips** and /k/ in **school**. The teacher repeatedly showed her own knowledge of the code throughout the lessons.

Sound stories for Stage 1 were also typed up in the form of a booklet which was handed out to each learner. Teacher B2 mentioned that the learners tend to become bored with these stories and therefore she also handed out Janet and John books for further reading.

In the next grade, Grade 3, some sounds are repeated as revision early in the first term before the teacher continues with the next sound, as these SRS sounds are arranged systematically. This practice also benefits new learners who join the school in Grade 2 or 3.

4.2.1.3. Overview of SRS spelling lessons in Grade 3

This section describes the observations of the SRS spelling lessons in Grade 3 focusing on learner participation, skill transfer and the teacher's display of knowledge of the English alphabet code. Thereafter the lessons as observed during the first week are presented in tabular form (see Appendix J).

In Grade 3, the teacher continued to teach a controlled number of the most common sound spellings according to SRS as set out in stage 1. The lessons observed in Grade 3 occurred over a period of three weeks because multiple spellings were taught and the learners were engaged in a variety of activities. These activities included spell spot, spell sort, reading, dictation,

decoding and coding multi-syllable words like *computer*. The focus sound was /ee/. After the teacher had introduced the different spellings of /ee/ during the first lesson, she asked learners to give examples of /ee/ words. Then she categorised them on the board. The board display gave emphasis to the focus sound spellings:

/ee/	/ea/	/e/	/ey/	/y/
beef	speak	me	donkey	happy
see	beacon	because	monkey	sunny
green	teacher	she	money	daddy

The first week in of Grade 3 is summarised in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Overview of SRS spelling lessons observed in Grade 3

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>A new sound was presented (ee) and its five spellings were introduced <i>ee/ea/e/ey/y</i></p> <p>Learners said the sound and write the spellings of the sound in the air as the teacher said it.</p> <p>Teacher categorised /ee/words learners say. Teacher wrote scrambled word on board, and said: I want you to build the word <i>money</i>.</p> <p>How many sounds can you hear? How many letters do you see?</p> <p><i>n m e y o _ _ _ _</i></p> <p>Worksheet 1 the learners sound out the word and copy it on the sound line. For example, easy = 4 letters but only 3 sounds</p> <p><i>_ _ _ ,</i></p> <p>the answer is <u>ea s y</u></p>	<p>Worksheet 2 required the learner to look at a word list and spot the sound, highlight it and write it down under the correct heading, in similar fashion to the teacher.</p> <p>Most learners did what was expected from them with ease. Some learners skipped the sounding out part and merely copied the words on the sound lines.</p> <p>These learners did not follow the teacher's instructions.</p> <p>She explained to them that if they skipped this important step, they would be cheating themselves.</p>	<p>Learners read the sound story 'Sally the green sheep' and spotted all the /ee/ sounds and list each under the correct spelling.</p> <p>Teacher encouraged learners to have key words for each spelling, for example ee like in bee, ea like in beach, y in happy, to help them to distinguish between the different spellings for the same sound</p> <p>Learners also made drawings next to each word to enhance memory.</p>	<p>Read 'The greedy sheep' and do syllabification.</p> <p>Add a suffix <i>-ly</i> and practice segmenting and blending of longer words like <i>happily, hungrily, greedily</i> and discussed what happened to the y.</p>	<p>Spelling activity based on three exercises:</p> <p>Link words with correct meaning, crossword puzzle and an 'add another vowel' activity.</p>

The teacher asked the learners why the last **e** in *because* could not be highlighted like an /ee/ sound in the Monday lesson in Table 4.3 above. They responded that it was not an /ee/ because it does not sound like it. The learners seemed confident and showed by using the sound lines accurately, that they knew the sound–symbol relationship. The teacher emphasised the difference between the number of letters in a word and the number of sounds in a word.

The classroom was a print-rich environment, and the thematic displays were colourful and creative. There was a health corner with posters displaying pictures of theme words like *thermometer, fever, doctor, illness, medicine, injection, tablets, infection*, as well as a variety learner-made posters. Wall displays included adverbs, adjectives and degrees of comparison. The teacher explained that in addition to the sound stories, other books (fiction and non-fiction) were also available for learners to read. These books were kept on a bookshelf and learners could choose one book every three weeks. These books consisted of levelled readers, popular stories and nonfiction.

Learners were given adequate exercises to practise their new skill. There was dictionary work, silly rhymes, ‘add a vowel’, ‘add a prefix/suffix’, cloze activities, find a word in a word and write a sentence with the word activities (see Appendix M). These were done as classroom-based activities as well as for homework. Some were also selected for assessment activities. SRS worksheets were handed out and SRS stories were used, in this case, ‘Sally the green sheep’ was used to spot the sound /ee/. The learners used syllable lines to practise working with multi-syllable words.

Teacher B3 emphasised that although learners were then aware that the same sound could be symbolised by more than one spelling, such as the **ee** spelt as **e**, **ee**, **ea**, **ey** and **y**, they needed to remember that one spelling may symbolise more than one sound, for example **i** in **sit**, **in** and **idea**. This was practised using the SRS sound-sort worksheets. The teacher would ask learners to sound out *cream*, *bread* and *great*. Learners noted the difference between the **ea** in **cream** and the **ea** in **bread** and the **ea** in **great**, thus arriving at the conclusion that although the sounds look exactly the same, **ea** can be /ee/ in **cream**, or /e/ in **bread** or /a-e/ in **great**.

An integrated approach was followed and grammar often formed part of the spelling lesson. Adding a suffix (**-ly** e.g. **greedy-greedily**) and learning about plurals that end on **y** (**baby-babies**) were done simultaneously with the /ee/ sound. In order to implement methods of instruction that will develop students’ spelling skills effectively, teachers must have their own

personal literacy-related content knowledge (Carreker, Joshi & Boulware-Gooden, 2010). In the next grade, Grade 4, SRS is mainly employed as learning support for those learners who are struggling.

4.2.1.4. Summary

SRS sets out to present the complex English spelling code in simple incremental steps. This implies that the lessons start with simple steps and then progress gradually to more advanced levels. Rose (2006) stresses that research has revealed the significance of systematic phonic teaching for beginner readers. SRS lessons provide learners with the opportunity to segment, blend and switch sounds in words in order to spell and read English words correctly. The complex nature of English spelling is taught to shed light on multiple spellings, for example the letter **a** in **hat** and the same **a** in **what**. Three stages of spelling taught in SRS. The foundation stage where one-to-one correspondences for 23 sounds are introduced (5 vowels and 18 letters). Stage 1 where spelling centres on multiple spellings for each sound, but only the most common four or five spellings for each sound are taught. This includes three Latin endings: (a) /shun/ (**-tion, -cian**) as in **station, magician**, (b) /zhun/ **-sion** as in **vision** and (c) /zher/ **-sure** as in **measure**. Finally, stage 2 is for the more advanced learner and comprises the full array of spellings and advanced multi-syllable work.

Throughout all the lessons that were observed, learners used sounds and processed sounds to make new words, sounding out words from left to right. Although the sounds follow a systematic progression, teachers are flexible and sometimes teach spelling guided by learner questions. This is what happened when little Chloe asked about the spelling of her name.

An incremental learning approach is followed within each grade and through to the following grades. Grade 1 started with segmenting each sound aloud, and moving on to unscrambling words to writing out a word on sound lines; Grade 2 started on a more advanced level, with longer texts and smaller font used in the worksheets. Learners were introduced to two-syllable words with squashed vowels or a schwa. The sound of these vowels differ from their spelling/pronunciation, for example in *pocket* the **e** sounds like an **i** *pock/et* is read as *pockit*. Learners say these two-syllable words and identify their natural break in the same way as they did in Grade 1 with compound words like *laptop* and *sunset*. When a spelling mistake is made, for example *carret* for *carrot*, the teacher explained that the sound is not always matched by the spelling. SRS provides a worksheet to practise building schwa words.

In Grade 3, progression is even more advanced. SRS worksheets demand more from the learner and grammar is often taught at the same time as the new focus sound. Even the wall displays in the classrooms reflect the gradual increment in teaching the different grades. In Grade 1 there were posters on vowels, in Grade 2, verbs and nouns were displayed and in Grade 3, adverbs and adjectives were displayed. Multiple spellings for one sound are taught and towards the end of the year three Latin endings are introduced. Moats (2009) argues that English orthography embodies sounds, syllable patterns, meaningful word parts (morphemes), along with the language from which a word originated and these should be taught effectively.

4.2.2. Results of document analysis

Another method that was used to collect data was through the analysis of both personal and formal documents. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), existing documents can be a valuable source of data, therefore documents such as the National Curriculum (2010), the newly revised English syllabi (NIED, 2015), the Integrated Planning Manual for Grades 1, 2 and 3 (NIED, 2015) and the learners' books (notebooks and test books) were analysed. These documents were reviewed in order to find data pertaining the established language goals of the Lower Primary Phase and how learner activities relate to the curriculum.

The document study was guided by the six questions as stipulated in Chapter 3:

1. Were the majority of the learners able to complete the given activities successfully?
2. Do the spelling test scores look good, average or poor?
3. Are the learner activities parallel to the common goals of the revised curriculum?
4. What other techniques were applied to help learners to develop their spelling skills?
5. What are the language goals as set out in the curriculum for the Lower Primary Phase?
6. How do the timetable and allocation of periods impact the teaching of spelling?

The data obtained are discussed under the headings, Timetabling and spelling, Curriculum requirements in Grades 1, 2 and 3, and Learner books.

4.2.2.1. Timetabling and spelling

Timetables were obtained from each teacher which helped to verify whether any specific period was assigned to spelling. However, the timetable only indicated the different subjects for each period as shown later in this chapter.

Teacher B3 raised the concern (see Appendix K) that it can be problematic to set aside time for spelling, as the new adapted syllabi are crammed with work to be done in each subject. It is important to understand this concern from the perspective of the teacher in a teaching setting where one teacher teaches all the subjects, as is the case in this research. This is the case for the entire Lower Primary Phase, although non-promotion subjects like Physical Education may be offered by a specialist teacher.

However, it is a fact that the timetable does not specifically set aside time for spelling. Table 4.4 shows the number of periods allocated to each subject per week for the Lower Primary Phase.

Table 4.4: Allocation of periods for subjects in the Lower Primary Phase

Subject	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
First Language	10	10	9
English Second Language	6	6	9
Mathematics	8	8	9
Environmental Studies	3	3	4
Arts	2	2	3
Religious and Moral Education	2	2	2
Physical Education	2	2	2
Reading	1	1	1
Total	34	34	40

As discussed in the previous chapter, the national curriculum for the Lower Primary supports flexible timetabling. For example, in Grade 1 the ‘period allocation’ per week for First Language is 10 periods out of the total of 34. This implies that approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes per day (6 hours 30 minutes per week) is allocated to English. It is left to the teacher’s discretion to ensure that all components of language are developed adequately. Flexible timetabling enables the teacher to continue with a lesson should the need arise. This allows for the timetable to be adapted suit the needs of the learners and to comply with curriculum

requirements. There are very definite teaching objectives to be achieved and the importance of spelling as just one component of language development which can easily be overlooked. The four skill areas in Language are Listening and Responding, Speaking and Communicating, Reading and Viewing, and Writing but these have many components, as set out in the Integrated Planning Manual. For example, the first two skills require vocabulary and language structures. In learning to read and write learners must develop phonological awareness and an understanding of phonics, must learn to recognise commonly used words and learn and practise letter formation (Integrated Planning Manual, 2014). Because the curriculum supports flexible integrated timetabling and time allocation (National Curriculum for Basic Education), the teacher makes the decisions regarding how much time will be spend on teaching spelling. According to Reed (2012), in the past teachers regarded either reading or writing skills as more important or assumed that the English language spelling system was too irregular and unpredictable for meaningful instruction to occur. Today, spelling is acknowledged as being much more than merely a rote memorisation activity; instead it is regarded as a process of linguistic and cognitive progression.

4.2.2.2. Curriculum requirements in Grade 1, 2 and 3

The National Curriculum for Basic Education (2006:21) has formulated the following competencies that should be attained on completion of the Lower Primary Phase:

- First Language learners express themselves well orally, read appropriate texts, and write reasonably correctly for their everyday purposes, in their Mother Tongue.
- Second Language learners understand, speak, read and write English as a Second Language well enough within a limited range to continue learning through the medium of English in the next phase.

These phase competencies are broken down into more detailed statements of basic competencies at the subject syllabus level. As mentioned earlier, the newly revised English syllabi (NIED, 2015) and the Integrated Planning Manual for Grade 1, 2 and 3 (NIED, 2015) were consulted to list the curricular competencies concerning English as First and Second language (see Appendix L). The essence of the envisioned teaching implies the following:

- The curriculum requires that letter formation is revised and practised at the same time as letter sounds are studied in phonics.

- Integrated teaching should be flexible and progression is regarded as essential.
- The order in which the components of the subjects are taught should be logical and sequential.
- Subject components like handwriting, phonics and number concept development should be taught in a planned, sequential manner.
- Teachers should know what the curriculum entails in order for them to implement it effectively.

These learners are required to master the following phonics by the end of Grade 3:

- Word families (word endings) -nd (end/and/und) -ng (ing/ang/ong/ung) -st (ust/ast/est) -ck (eck/uck/ack/ock/ick) -ll (ill/ell/ull) -nk (ink/unk/ank)
- Vowel combinations (ee, ai, ea, oa, oe, ie, ue, ei, oa)
- Revise digraphs (wh/ch/th/sh/ar/or/ur/er)
- Word families with initial consonant blends (bring, brush, branch / /pram, prom, private / crib, crust, crack, crash)
- Develop word families with initial consonant combinations – st, sp, sl (star, stand, stick / spell, spin, spill, spend / slap, sling.)
- Extend 2 letter blends to 3 letter blends – scr (scrap, scrub, scratch) spr (spring, sprint) and str (string, strong, street, strap)
- Extend 2 letter blends to 3 letter blends – squ (squirt, squirrel, squash) thr (thrill, thrush, three)
- Explore word families – words ending in – ng (ing) (ring, sing, king, wing + 'ing' on verbs; falling, looking, running)
- Explore word families – words ending in – ng (ang, ung, & ong) (rang, sang, hang/ rung, hung, lung/ long, song)
- Explore word families – words containing or ending in – nd (and, end) (band, hand, land, sand, land /bend, lend, tend, mend)
- Explore word families – words containing or ending in – nd (ond/und) (pond, round, found, sound)

However, when employing the SRS methodology, teachers are required to keep to the underlying principles of SRS. So, whereas it is common practice for teachers to teach

consonant clusters (*br, br, cr, cl, dr, fl, fr*), in SRS the emphasis is on isolating the individual sounds in the word. SRS methodology operates on incremental teaching and therefore teaches one sound instead of consonant clusters (two sounds). Teaching consonant clusters would add more sounds to learn. The SRS teacher uses worked-out plans to teach a complex spelling system in simple, logical steps, building up from common to rare spellings.

4.2.2.3. Learners' books

The first observation regarding the spelling books was that Grades 1 and 2 had books for spelling only, whereas Grade 3 had just one English book. The data obtained from reviewing the spelling books and the test books will be discussed for each grade.

Grade 1

The books revealed that learner activities were planned according to the incremental teaching of sounds in the SRS. The majority of learners achieved good results in the tests and the activities were in the main completed accurately, as seen in the copies of learner work (see Appendix M). As part of SRS teaching learners built simple compound words with letter tiles. In Grade 1, six steps, as set out in the SRS handbook, were followed to teach multi-syllable words using learner names like *Su/san, Chris/to/pher*. Simple compound words like *sun/set, lap/top* are written with the syllable break, for example *dust/bin*. This was done to introduce learners to the natural break in words. An integrated approach was followed and teachers integrated handwriting with spelling and reading. SRS worksheets include activities such as singular and plural worksheets (*cat-cats, dog-dogs, rat-rats*). In Grade 1, the first sound /t/ is introduced and learners had to find pictures of objects that begin with /t/ and then practise writing the *t*. Connect-the-dots activities and circle the objects that start with *t* (see Appendix J) were done. The books showed that sight words were taught in class, as the progression of sounds continued. In Grade 1, the first six sounds taught were *t, o, p, m, a, n*. Therefore, words like *on, at, no, to* were taught to the learners. *The, a* and *I* were taught as whole words and learners had to memorise them. Whole-word teaching was applied to teach specific words, for example *one, two, once*. A list of high frequency words and a drawing of the body labelled with all the basic body parts was pasted at the back page of the spelling book. The days of the week, months of the year and number names also were practised often.

Several scrapbook activities were done whereby learners cut up words into their sound-spelling components and pasted them back together in the right sound spelling column. Thereafter the

word was written down on sound lines. Common mistakes that were identified in the books were the confusion with **b** and **d** and, to a lesser extent, **b** and **p**. Teachers used methods like small **b** hides in big **B**. Teachers also encouraged learners to remember the picture that matched the letter, like **p** for *pig*.

Grade 2

SRS worksheets and other worksheets created by the teacher were completed successfully by most learners. A few learners still confused the **b** and **d** letters. The teacher handed out a picture of a bed and asked the learners to highlight the **b** and **d**. The sound story was often used for dictation and the selection of spelling words. Apart from syllables and compound words, there is evidence in the books to show that learners had to add a suffix, *ing/ed*. Learners were also taught that some words contain schwas or squashed vowels like *pocket* which sounds like *pockit* because the **e** sounds like an **i**.

Several scrapbook activities were done whereby learners cut up words into their sound-spelling components and pasted them back together in the right sound spelling column. The word was then written down again on sound lines. Test scores looked good and the teacher contemplated not using spelling test scores as part of the assessment because it might inflate final results. This implied that learners often scored high marks in spelling tests. High frequency words were taught as whole words which learners had to memorise. There was a list of these words pasted in the learner books. Spelling lists were often linked to the theme of the week, for example transport. Dictionary work was done and sentences were written to practise some new words.

Grade 3

Most learners were able to complete the activities successfully, although there were a few who struggled a bit. The teacher printed all the worksheets with a font size of 14 to minimise extra strain for individuals with learning difficulties. The Namibian government supports inclusive education. All learners are offered learning support and teachers work with them in smaller groups and individual sessions. Test scores were compiled when specific spelling activities had been completed successfully. The sound story was often used for dictation and spelling words.

Learners had adequate practice sheets and the integrated approach ensured that the knowledge and skills taught were well consolidated. A variety of activities were done apart from the SRS worksheets. Dictionary work and sentence construction were practised regularly. Grade 3s

were given some sound dictionary activities where learners sorted spellings according to sound, such as cream and bread into /ee/ and /e/.

An integrated approach was followed and grammar often formed part of the spelling lesson. Homophones were introduced, such as pear/pair and there/their. In Grade 3 activities included building word puzzles in syllable chunks like cut-up pieces, for example a/ ch ie ve/ m e n t. Learners worked with multi-syllable words and worksheets where learners showed that when a word ends on **y**, *-ing* has to be added; the **y** becomes **i** like *cry-cried*. Plurals such as baby-babies, aunty, aunties were integrated in the spelling activities. High frequency words were taught as whole words which learners had to memorise. There were activities in the book where the CCC method was applied to practise sight words. The CCC method refers to how learners copy the word, cover it and check/compare (Reed, 2012).

Corrections were done by writing down the correct word three times in coloured pencil. Effort was made to incorporate the theme in the spelling activities such as a cloze activity on 'Going to the dentist' as part of 'Occupations', as a sub-theme of the Social Environment.

4.2.2.4. Summary

The timetables indicate two periods daily for English and an extra period for reading. However, spelling is not stipulated specifically on the timetable. Teachers used one period (mostly on a Monday) to introduce a sound and then squeezed in the spelling activities planned for the rest of the week. These spelling activities were done by taking time from other periods and integrating them creatively with other language skills.

The learner books provided a lot of information, such as the learners' activities and how they related to curricular requirements. Frequent engagement with written words or the explicit teaching of spelling rules, fostered an increased awareness amongst the children regarding allowable letter combinations, for example **ck** is found at the end but not the beginning of English words (Apel, 2011). It also brought to light that sight words were listed separately and taught as whole words, while lists were pasted in learner books for them to study at home. Sight words or high frequency words were taught within the SRS programme like any other words in the sound group to which they belong, for example /ee/ words like *we, she, he, be, three, seen, tree, these*. Dictation is where learners write down words or sentences that the teacher reads out and can be done once learners have adequate writing skills. 'Cloze' refers to different kinds of 'fill in the blanks' exercises.

4.2.3. Results of the interview

Following the lesson observations, a focus group interview was held to establish how lessons were conducted. Yin (2011) emphasises that such a group is regarded as focused because the participant teachers (in the case of this study) have had a common experience. This interview was transcribed and the text was reduced to segments of information (short sentences) which were labelled with descriptive code words, such as SRS lesson detail, adjustments, strengths and weaknesses, knowledge of curriculum, knowledge of English orthography and teacher perceptions. The aim of the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data is to discover patterns, ideas, explanations and understandings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). By using the computer software program, QDA Miner Lite, the collected data were scanned for patterns and ideas and coded accordingly. Thereafter themes were generated by reducing the list of codes to obtain five to seven themes so as to compile a qualitative report. Emerging themes included ‘the spelling lesson’, ‘teacher perception of spelling’, and ‘benefits and limitations of the SRS methodology’. These categories will be discussed below and teacher statements regarding SRS benefits and limitations will be presented in tabular form.

4.2.3.1. Spelling lessons

It is essential to teach spelling effectively during the primary grades, because it is such a significant factor in the literacy development of young children. (Graham et al., 2008). Graham et al. (2008) also contend that because spelling is essential to reading comprehension, it should be taught effectively during the primary years.

Responding to the first question on how spelling is taught, teacher B3 explained that every Monday morning a new sound was introduced in her class, while teacher B1 used the first ten to fifteen minutes of every day to do a spelling activity based on the Monday target sound. Teacher B2 indicated that she also started with a new sound in the beginning of the week and then did spelling activities throughout the week based on the target sound. Monday was the day used to introduce the focus sound and its associated spelling/spellings.

In response to the question of how words are selected for the spelling lists which were tested on Fridays, all three teachers indicated that the progression of sounds according to the SRS and the wordlists guided their spelling lists. As a thematic approach is followed, theme-related words were also used if they fitted the sound of the week. For example, if a teacher taught the /a-e/sound while exploring transport as a theme, /a-e/ words (**train**, **railway**, **airplane**) or lorry, donkey, **wheel**, if the target sound was /ee, can be used to compile the spelling list.

The teachers used different levels of worksheets to cater for diverse needs, such as more challenging worksheets for the faster learner or a word search and catch-up work for the slower learner. Participant B3 used a variety of activities like word building and puzzles to strengthen spelling ability. This participant also arranged afternoon sessions for learners who really struggled. Participant B3 viewed the extra worksheets of different levels as a problem: *“the problem is just that you must design two levels of worksheets and sometimes three different levels ...”*. The implication is that the teacher firstly has to be aware of the level on which the learner is currently operating. Once this level has been established, the teacher then offers a suitable activity to cater for all the different levels. Naturally, this would require some reflection from the teacher and an awareness of learner ability.

4.2.3.2. Teacher perception of spelling

In accordance with the above findings, teachers viewed spelling differently to before they received SRS training. Their approach had been changed by their training. Participant B3 replied, *“I must say that before SRS I just handed out a list, build sentences and wrote a Friday test. SRS has made me more aware of sounds and of how to give it to the learner.”*

Similarly, the HOD mentioned that before the training she *“used mandatory lists, hoping that I don't mess it up ... But I had no specific strategy”*. In the past, the teachers had been left to their own devices and merely handed out lists and built sentences and tested learners on Fridays.

Training in SRS had had a great impact on participant B3's view on spelling: *“SRS made me aware that thoughtful activities that elicit understanding are more likely to produce better results than enforcing skills like memorisation and guessing.”* This is in line with the response from participant B2 who said *“... after the training I understand why /au/ words can sound so different like aunt and sauce ... au used to be a nightmare to me. I could not answer the children when they asked me why? It is so simple ... it is two different sounds spelt in the same way!”*

Teachers had to give examples of how learners transfer their new skills to other areas of writing and reading, and teacher B3 referred to a cloze activity, build a sentence, write a rhyme, find a rhyming word. This teacher believes that spelling is interrelated with reading and that as reading improves so does spelling. Teacher B1 stated that she could hear how the children corrected themselves as they grappled with words when the need for a sound switch arose.

Teacher B2 asked learners to build sentences with the spelling words and believed that skill transfer also occurs when learners answer reading comprehension.

Furthermore, the experience of participant B1 provides insight on an essential component that needs to receive more attention in teacher education programmes:

I was a bit overwhelmed and not really keen on teaching spelling. English is not my first language and during teacher training, we did not really focus much on how to teach spelling, much less English spelling. I must admit it was reduced to a one day of the week lesson, it is only now that I have come to understand that it is a systematic process. I used random words in my spelling lists, from the Internet like frequently misspelt words or homophones ... sometimes theme related words.

During the interview, this participant even mentioned the word “*empowered*” to describe how she felt after she had received the SRS training. Graham et al. (2008) emphasise that learners have to recognise, learn and use the patterns in English spelling through systematic, explicit instruction and activities. Such instruction requires careful planning, but is much more effective than merely memorising words rote fashion. However, Moats and Foorman (2009) emphasise that the benefits of scientific research can only be useful if teachers understand and implement them.

The next paragraph describes the benefits and limitations of SRS as spelling methodology as perceived by the four teachers.

4.2.3.3. The benefits of SRS as perceived by the teachers

The teachers agreed that SRS provided knowledge and skill to them as teachers and equipped them to teach spelling from another perspective. Amongst the benefits mentioned is the fact that SRS lends itself to inclusive education and can be applied as a catch-up programme during the afternoons. Teacher B3 responded, “*I like most that children can discover patterns as you make them aware of the sounds in words, and they match it to its letter pattern...and that c followed by i is pronounced s ... They love that lightbulb moment ... and I love that light in their eyes when they've grasped a concept.*” This statement captures the teacher’s passion to ensure understanding when teaching.

Other benefits that were listed included the fact that SRS is a worked-out plan that offers a systematic progression of sounds and makes spelling and reading easier to teach. Teaching aids

consist of copies or printouts of the SRS worksheets or stories and no extra equipment is needed. This makes the system accessible and affordable. The programme necessitates that children segment and blend all the time, which is an essential component of spelling and reading, thus bringing about an awareness of words and sounds. The teachers believe that this explicit teaching of spelling also benefits reading ability. The relationship between spelling and reading was acknowledged and the HOD described it as: *“Spelling and reading are really two sides of a coin!”*

The HOD emphasised that the more exposure the learners (who are not native English speakers) have to the English spelling system the better they are equipped to deal with it. The HOD proposed a steady pace towards teaching the basic code:

I am convinced that as they progress, the learners will realise that it is all parts and pieces of a bigger puzzle. The more sounds they can be exposed to, the better. The more they hear it the more they become accustomed to it and the more we expect them to apply their knowledge, the better. The more they learn and experience the English sounds, the better the chance of internalising it. They are not going to unlearn their mother tongue and as much as there can be advantages when transferring phonologic or dialectal knowledge, there can also be disadvantages, like in Afrikaans the /l/ sound is represented by the letter **l** but in English it can be **l**, **ll**, **le** or **el** and often Afrikaans students write sample as samp~~l~~e/samp~~l~~il. Therefore, it is imperative to have them practise what applies to English during the first three years of schooling.

The shortcomings of this methodology, as perceived by the teachers who have implemented it, are discussed in the next paragraph.

4.2.3.4. The limitations of SRS as perceived by the teachers

As much as the teachers support the whole notion of teaching phonics systematically to learners, they are also facing problems relating to the opaque nature of English spelling. Some words with tricky spellings (*one, two, once, the, are, eye, whom*) are extremely difficult to decode and therefore the teachers in this study had opted to teach them as whole words. All the teachers who participated in this study had experienced this problem. Another concern that was raised was the fact that silent letters are not acknowledged in the SRS methodology and words like knee and autumn have tricky spellings to learn. Teachers are then forced to become very creative. Moreover, teachers fear that teaching spelling (which is only one component of one

subject in a demanding curriculum with many other subjects) this way can be very time consuming. *“It is a lot of work for the teacher. One can easily slip into your old ways and just grab a worksheet that requires learners to fill in the correct word ... or give a random list of words for spelling”* said teacher B3. Although this teacher voiced her frustration that SRS does not address sight words or silent letters, which are a reality in classrooms, they are taught in SRS within their sound group.

Furthermore, the Integrated Planning Manual offers a year plan for the schools that want to follow the syllabus. Therefore, the necessity to design another year plan for the SRS is regarded as extra work by the teachers who opt to use this method. The SRS demands reflection and planning to ensure that differentiation is warranted. Boredom is a real threat, which is why a steady pace is suggested. Table 4.5 shows the statements regarding the benefits and shortcomings as perceived by the teachers.

Table 4.5: Teachers’ statements on benefits and limitations SRS

Benefits	Limitations
<p>The learners have all the activities ... the cloze, build a sentence, write a rhyme, find a rhyming word. I believe they transfer their knowledge to their written work and because the spelling is interrelated to reading like we say /s/ when the c is followed by e, i or y like in cell, circle or cycle, the reading also improves as the spelling does.</p>	<p>Some learners skipped the sounding out part and merely copied the words on the sound lines.</p>
<p>I can agree with that ... They do transfer their skill ... I can hear how they correct themselves as they grapple with words where a sound switching takes place ... like the /i/ in I, in and sit.</p>	<p>The problem is just that you must design two levels of worksheets and sometimes three different levels.</p>
<p>The more they learn and experience the English sounds, the better the chance of internalising it. They are not going to unlearn their mother tongue and as much as there can be advantages when transferring phonologic or dialectal knowledge, there can also be disadvantages, like in Afrikaans the /l/ sound is represented by the letter l but in English it can be l, ll, le or el.</p>	<p>Takes a lot of planning, you have to sit and do a year plan because the year plans in the Integrated Planning Manual do not follow SRS.</p>
<p>We do inclusive education so I enlarged the font to size 14 and use SRS as learning support for those who struggle.</p>	<p>It does not say what to do with high frequency words or sight words as we know it traditionally and silent letters ... that is a bit frustrating.</p>
<p>The fact that children can make sense of it all ... understanding to segment/blend ... I myself learned about most of the different sounds only now when I receiving SRS training and I felt so empowered, how much more does a child feel when gaining understanding?</p>	<p>But a word like <i>the</i> I teach as a whole word, it would take too long to wait for all the sight words to come along within their sound group, as expected when you teach through SRS.</p>



Benefits cont'd	Limitations cont'd
<p>I was a bit overwhelmed and not really keen on teaching spelling. English is not my first language and during teacher training we did not really focus much on how to teach spelling, much less English spelling. I must admit it was basically reduced to a one day of the week lesson, it is only now that I have come to understand that it is a systematic process. I used random words in my spelling lists, from the Internet like frequently misspelt words or homophones ... sometimes theme related words.</p>	<p>It is a lot of work for the teacher. One can easily slip into your old ways and just grab a worksheet that requires learners to fill in the correct word ... or give a random list of words for spelling.</p>
<p>It makes spelling and reading easier to teach. There is a system in place ... I just follow it. Teaching aids are cheap ... no fancy or expensive equipment. If you can make copies, you are ready for class. Of course, you still have to prepare ... [laughs].</p>	<p>It would be useful if there were levelled readers based on SRS. And some stories that the learners can relate to would have been nice.</p>
<p>At least now, after the training I understand why /au/ words can sound so different like aunt and sauce ... au used to be a nightmare to me. I could not answer the children when they asked me why? It is so simple ... it is two different sounds spelt in the same way!</p>	<p>Boring</p>
<p>I like most that children can discover patterns as you make them aware of the sounds in words, and they match it to its letter pattern.</p>	<p>Books are introduced late. It demands planning and can become tiring and boring. Therefore, it is essential to maintain a steady speed ... move on.</p>

Table 4.5 shows that when the teachers had to reflect on their implementation of SRS the perceived benefits seem to outweigh the problems they experienced. Boredom is perceived as a problem, in this case the similarities in the worksheets and the delayed introduction of books. On the other hand, it was also observed that fun activities like crossword puzzles and word searches are included, presumably to spice up the spelling lessons. As mentioned earlier, Nies and Belfiore (2006) alert us to the issue that spelling programmes may be perceived as tedious and monotonous.

Another problem perceived by the teachers is the tendency to copy words instead of segmenting and blending them, or sounding out. Segmenting and blending are an essential component of the lesson which cannot be skipped as this might affect the learner's progress. According to Ehri (2014), instruction that promotes orthographic mapping brings about connections to be triggered when words are seen and read. Therefore, the writing system and phonemic segmenting and decoding skills should be taught explicitly. Orthographic mapping concerns the development of letter-sound connections to ground the spellings, pronunciations, and meanings of specific words in memory.

Lastly, the teachers complained about the lack of levelled readers based on the SRS, especially in Grades 2 and 3. According to a newspaper article in *The Namibian* (Leech, 2010), levelled reading books are in general short supply in many primary schools in Namibia. Leech (2010) mentions that some private schools manage to deliver good readers because these schools have a teaching system in place and learners have reading books. The lack of levelled reading books in state schools is a major problem and some of the SRS-sound stories are perceived to lack relevance for Namibian learners.

4.2.3.5. Summary

Spelling lessons started on a Monday but for the rest of the week, the teacher used 15 to 20 minutes to explain and hand out follow-up spelling activities. These activities were all based on the focus sound that had been introduced on the Monday. Although timetabling does not reflect specific time allocation for spelling or reading, the curriculum supports flexible timetabling and teachers may use their discretion to meet learners' needs. Spelling lists were compiled by using SRS lists or theme words, provided they fitted into the sound group. Teachers tried to cater for diverse needs by providing differentiated worksheets.

The interview also revealed that the teachers, who were not native English speakers, were implementing SRS with confidence. SRS was seen as a worked-out plan of action with all the teaching aids needed. Spelling tests were reviewed by the two teachers in Grade 1 and 2 while the Grade 3 teacher uses three selected activities for assessment.

From the interviews, it became clear that sight words and silent letters are perceived to be a problem and learners are required to learn them as whole words. It would take too long to wait for all the sight words to come along within their sound group, as should be the case in an ideal SRS setting, and would lead to a delay in the introduction of books. Teachers also complained about the lack of levelled readers. The sound stories were perceived to have no relation to the Namibian child. Learners seemed to become bored with the SRS worksheets and teachers tried to combat that by offering creative activities. No expensive equipment is needed to implement SRS and teachers could add their own activities to the existing worksheets.

4.3. RESEARCH QUESTION 2:

What adjustments if any did teachers make to ensure that the sound reading system as a spelling programme is indeed appropriate for Namibia?

In order to answer the second research question, the data collected from the lesson observations and the focus group interview, as well as the formal (Curriculum, syllabi and Manual for Integrated planning) and informal documents such as learner books and spelling test books, were studied.

4.3.1. Presentation and discussion of findings

This section will discuss the way in which the SRS spelling methodology was observed and what transpired during the informal discussions. The supporting evidence for the observations is available in the attached appendices. The teachers' pedagogical practices during the spelling cycle in each grade were closely observed and compared to the data collected from the learners' books and information obtained from the interview.

4.3.1.1. Lessons in Grade 1

In Grade 1, phonological awareness was promoted when the teacher asked: *How many sounds did you hear?* Learners sounded out the word and used sound lines to write the word down. Segments and blends were said aloud after the teacher had sounded out the first example.

Lesson content

This included the reading and writing of words. Learners used the target words in sentences, saying them out loud, and wrote them down for homework. Learners completed an activity on punctuation, writing down the names of people in capital letters, as indicated in the SRS worksheet.

Pronunciation was practised when teacher asked learners to say target words listed on the board: learners said /i/ as teacher indicated the word **sit**, but /i/ as teacher indicated the word **in** to practise sound switching.

Skill application/transfer

Learners did the SRS activities, looking at picture and writing on sound lines (as demonstrated by teacher) with pencils. Learners circled or coloured in the target sounds. Teacher explained in the interview that skills are transferred when learners build sentences with target words in the spelling list, read the foundation story and looked for target sound.

Teaching aids and evaluation

Chalkboard, worksheets, word charts with pictures and the sound stories. Learners were mostly able to complete the tasks on their own. The assessment consisted of the Friday test, where the teacher read out the spelling word, used it in a sentence and read it out loud again.

End of cycle remarks

Teaching spelling using the SRS is characterised by

- explicit instruction
- demonstrations and modelling
- a variety of oral and written activities to be done at school and at home
- systematic progression of sounds
- incremental teaching of sounds
- skill transfer
- integration with other language skills, for example compound words and unscrambling people's names to practise capitalisation
- integration with handwriting
- sound–letter relationship is reinforced.

Adjustment

Sight words are taught as whole words and a list handed out to learners for daily practice. Although sight words should be taught as the SRS lessons progress and are taught within their sound group, teachers used the whole-word method. During the interview it emerged that some of the sight words had indeed already been dealt with as appeared in the foundation stage. However, some words needed to be taught as whole words: *the, one, once, two, who, are, eye*.

Another observation was that the teacher handed out Janet and John books. In the SRS, simple level books are preferred and only after instruction of the sounds /ee/ /e/ /a-e/ /o-e/ and /ow/ to boost learner confidence when attempting to read. However, if teachers have to wait until they have taught all those sounds it might delay the introduction of books. That is also the probable reason for teaching sight words as whole words, as it would take too long to get to them “*within their sound group*”. Janet and John books were handed out before all the basic sounds had been taught and before all the sight words had been mastered. The learners were excited to have reading books, but still found them challenging to read.

4.3.1.2. Lessons in Grade 2

Phonological awareness was promoted when teacher asked: How many sounds did you hear? How many letter can you see on the board? Four letters and two sounds means that one sound can have ...? Teacher revised a previously taught alphabet code characteristic that two letters can represent one sound. Learners sounded out the word and used sound lines to write the word down. This provided the learner with a time and a place to listen for each sound because they write each sound down as they sound it and read the word back, thus reinforcing the sound–letter relationship. Segments and blends are said out loud after teacher has given the first example. The teacher asked learners to distinguish between the fuzzy th and the clear th, for example thanks and there.

Lesson content

This includes reading and writing of words. Learners used the target words in sentences, said them out loud and wrote them down for homework. Dictation was done from sound stories and a variety of oral activities, such as making up silly rhymes and sounding out words.

Skill application

Learners did the SRS activities, looking at pictures and writing on sound lines (as demonstrated by teacher) with pencils. They also read the sound story (Moths) and looked for the target sound (spell spotting) and sorted it according to its correct spelling (spell sorting). The teacher explained in the interview that skills are transferred during dictation and other reading/writing activities.

Teaching aids and evaluation

Chalkboard, worksheets, and word search. Learners were able to complete the task. Some learners tended to rush and just copy the words. Teacher monitored and checked to ensure everyone was segmenting. Three groups each were doing one activity. Group 1 did a segmenting and blending worksheet on the carpet with the teacher, while Group 2 did sound spotting and Group 3 did sound sorting. Then the groups rotated.

Learners wrote a test on the spelling list on Friday but the teacher was considering an alternative spelling assessment like the Grade 3 teacher, who used three activities to compile a mark for spelling.

End of cycle remarks

Teaching spelling is characterised by

- explicit instruction
- demonstrations and modelling
- variety of oral and written activities in school and at home
- systematic progression of sounds
- incremental teaching of sounds
- skill transfer
- integration with other language skills, for example, adding -ed
- integration with handwriting
- sound–letter relationship is reinforced.

Adjustment

Sight words were taught as whole words and a list was handed out to practise daily. Janet and John books were handed out before all the basic sounds were taught and before all the sight words were mastered. Learners took pride in their reading books although they still needed support to read all the words. Teacher reverted to SRS fundamentals and listed all the difficult words. The learners divided the words into syllables, and they segmented and blended to read them with the teacher's support. The teacher explained tricky spellings, for example in the word fascinating – fa/scin/nat/ing, the teacher explained that **sc** is an alternative spelling for

the sound /s/ just like in **science**. However, the teacher can only do this if all the learners have the same text/books.

Integration with other language skills like creative writing activities, reading comprehension and cloze activities occurred often.

SRS lists included words like *was, wash, wasp, watch, want, swan and swap* as examples of the /o/ sound with *a* spelling. The teacher did not teach that sound spelling and instead adapted the worksheet to show /o/ can be spelt as **o** or **au**.

4.3.1.3. Lessons in Grade 3

A new sound was presented (ee) and its five spellings were introduced ee/ea/e/ey/y. The teacher asked what learners could hear as she sounded out *h-a-p-p-y*. Teacher continued sounding out more words with /ee/ sound, and learners had to listen and give the word. Then she wrote the ee/ea/e/ey/y spellings on the board and asked learners to provide words with these spellings of /ee/. As learners gave words, teacher listed them on the board. Then she drew columns with each spellings and learners categorised each word accordingly. Teacher showed how **ea** in **eat** and **ea** in **head** are different sounds. Learners completed a sound worksheet to categorise **ea** spellings for words such as *eat, head, great*.

Lesson content

This included reading and writing of words, segmenting and blending. Learners used the target words in sentences, said them out loud and wrote them down for homework. Dictation from sound stories and a variety of oral activities, such as sound switching and sounding out words.

Skill application

Learners did the activity, sorting according to spellings (as modelled by teacher), with coloured pencils/highlighters. Completed sound-switch worksheets. Skill was transferred to writing activities like dictation, reading comprehension and cloze activities.

Teaching aids and evaluation

Chalkboard, SRS worksheets and sound stories were used to teach. Learners could complete most of the tasks effectively. There were a few who tried to just copy, but because the teacher

was monitoring closely she could address the issue. Instead of writing a test learners completed three activities (dictation, dictionary work, cloze) to obtain a mark.

End of cycle remarks

Teaching SRS spelling is characterised by

- explicit instruction
- demonstrations & modelling
- variety of oral and written activities at school and at home
- systematic progression of sounds
- incremental teaching of sounds
- skill transfer
- integration with other language skills, for example prefixes, suffixes, root words, adding a vowel
- integration with handwriting
- sound–letter relationship reinforced.

Adjustment

Sight words were taught as whole words and a list was handed out to practise daily. Reading stories (from Roald Dahl) were handed out before all the basic sounds were taught and before all the sight words were mastered. Learners took pride in their story books although they still needed teacher support to read. The teacher used SRS guidelines and listed all the difficult words. The learners divided the words into syllables, and they segmented and blended to read them with the teacher’s support. The teacher explained tricky spellings and the meanings of challenging words. However, the teacher can only do this if all the learners have the same text/books. Lessons were mostly integrated with other language skills like creative writing activities, reading comprehension and cloze activities.

4.3.2. Results from documents

4.3.2.1. Adjustments implemented by Grade 1 teacher

The learner books showed that the learners had to study sight words as whole words, even though the SRS methodology does not support such teaching. There were some sight words which the teacher had managed to teach within their sound group, but if the teacher were to

follow the within-sound group approach unfailingly, it would take a long time to work through the sight words. The teachers had also adapted the one-hour lesson format of the SRS to a range of activities over one or two weeks. Teacher also integrated the curricular demands with the SRS lessons by teaching handwriting and phonics, for example, simultaneously.

4.3.2.2. Adjustments implemented by Grade 2 teacher

The learners' books revealed that spelling lists were created mostly on a Monday and then follow-up activities were done throughout the week and some were done at home. In contrast, the SRS methodology is based on one-hour lessons conducted at least three times a week. Therefore, it is safe to say that the teacher was trying to do the same amount of work over an extended period. The SRS methodology requires extensive teacher support and homework activities are thus a questionable option.

4.3.2.3. Adjustments implemented by Grade 3 teacher

The learners' spelling books showed many activities that were not SRS worksheets, for example cloze activities and reading comprehensions based on the target sound. These are not exactly the fail-safe worksheets that SRS supports, but the teacher was convinced that children need to be challenged. The teacher believed that the activities helped to consolidate the sound spellings. The sight word lists indicated no spelling patterns and were taught as whole words.

4.3.2.4. Summary

From the National Curriculum for Basic Education (2010) and the Integrated Planning Manuals (2014) for Grades 1, 2 and 3, all the requirements pertaining to English First Language and Second Language were summarised (see Appendix L) and compared to principles of SRS as set out in Chapter 2. The adjustments that had been made were visible in the learner activities and tests. While the SRS does not endorse the teaching of sight words, teachers had incorporated them into their teaching. In addition, while the programme has been designed for individual teaching, it was adapted to whole-class teaching, without interfering with the progression of sounds. The next section discusses the results obtained from the interview.

4.3.3. Results from the interview

4.3.3.1. Adjustments to SRS methodology in Grade 1

The Grade 1 teacher explained that SRS had been designed to assist the flawed reader, as a one-on-one approach. However, this had been adapted to a whole-class approach. Accordingly, the SRS was applied within a thematic approach as the curriculum requires. The teacher had

integrated silent letters and sight words as part of the spelling programme for example **kn** for /n/ + **ee** for /ee/= knee (4 letters and two sounds).

4.3.3.2. Adjustments to the SRS methodology in Grade 2

The teacher explained that working in smaller groups helped identify possible mistakes and rectify them when observing the learners. The question pertaining to the changes that had been made revealed that the teachers had agreed to teach /o/ as spelt with an **o** or **au** instead of with an **a**, as it is worked out in the SRS worksheets. Furthermore, the teacher followed both a thematic approach and an integrated approach to grammar and language. Sound stories were explained and altered if needed to ensure that the learners found them appealing.

4.3.3.3. Adjustments to SRS methodology in Grade 3

Some of the sound stories were changed to make them more appealing to the learners. For example, instead of Sally the green sheep, the character became Sally the greedy sheep. The teacher used a variety of spelling activities like puzzles and cloze activities to keep learners interested. Furthermore, the teacher also introduced another technique, the CCC method, whereby, in order to learn the sight words, learners copied the sight word, covered it, wrote it out and checked it.

4.3.3.4. Summary

The interviews brought to light that the most important adjustments to the methodology were the explicit use of whole-word teaching to teach sight words or high frequency words and the decision to teach /o/ as spelt with **o** or **au** instead of an **a** as it is proposed in the SRS. However, the teachers immersed their class teaching of English spellings in the SRS methodology and adapted situations to the needs of learners, for example using the CCC method to help learners learn sight words.

4.4. CONCLUSION

The SRS was aligned to the current curriculum and teachers had made some adjustments to cater for their own needs, such as teaching sight words. Although this is not in line with the SRS methodology, teachers did so because they did not want to delay handing out reading books. Teachers followed an integrated approach, which refers to linking environmental themes to other areas of learning. Therefore it is quite easy to transfer spelling skills to other written activities that require, for example, adding a suffix, using a compound word, remembering what to do with plurals ending on y like fly – flies. Furthermore, this

methodology can be applied as a learning support method, which is endorsed by the national curriculum. The SRS was initially a one-on-one approach but is now applied as whole-class instruction.

Other curriculum requirements such as integrated handwriting and informal assessment, which should be based on observation, are complied with although this implies that teachers are not following the SRS methodology rigidly. One specific worksheet on the /o/ was altered to cater for the Namibian pronunciation of wash and wasp. The teachers agreed to rather teach an alternative spelling for /o/ and omitted teaching **a** as a spelling for /o/.

The next chapter summarises the findings, draws conclusions from the research and makes recommendations for dealing with the challenge of teaching English spelling in Grades 1, 2 and 3.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of the study which aimed to provide an awareness of the way the SRS is used as a method for teaching English spelling in Grades 1, 2 and 3 in Namibia. The findings on the first research question are summarised in section 5.3, while section 5.4 discusses the findings on the second question. This is followed by a discussion of the recommendations, suggestions and the conclusion. The research questions are repeated here as follows:

- What are the benefits and limitations of teaching spelling by applying the Sound Reading System?
- What adjustments, if any, did teachers make to ensure that the Sound Reading System as a spelling programme is indeed appropriate for Namibia?

5.2. SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

As mentioned in Chapter 2, it is essential to teach spelling effectively during the primary grades because it is crucial for literacy development in children. Teachers need to be trained in the English writing system because that is what they are expected to teach. The results of this case study showed an increase in the teachers' orthographic knowledge after SRS training and, based on the teachers' display of orthographic knowledge of the English writing system, this is valuable knowledge that every junior primary teacher should possess.

5.2.1. Research question 1: What are the benefits and limitations of teaching spelling by applying the Sound Reading System?

5.2.1.1. English spelling instruction

The literature warns that spelling methodologies should be applied that are based on research and methods that might be familiar but which are not evidence based should be avoided. In an age when many spelling methods are available on the Internet, it is of the utmost importance to adopt a method that is scientifically proven. Word recognition, spelling and reading comprehension should be rooted in a systematic phonics programme (Boyadzhyan, 2012). The

SRS is a scientifically based, systematic phonics programme and the findings show that the teachers in this study taught the sounds using a systematic, incremental method.

It was found that initially close supervision is needed during lessons to ensure that the correct procedures are followed when activities are completed. This prevented learners from merely copying the words onto their worksheets without segmenting and blending. The teachers taught the English alphabetic code by moving from simple to more complex principles. In addition, in line with curricular guidelines, they catered for diversity by designing differentiated worksheets. This was, however, perceived as a lot of work for the teacher who also had to draw up a year plan, which other teachers who do not employ the SRS as spelling method are not required to do. However, the teachers in this study felt that they had a worked-out plan to implement and this motivated them to compile the year plan accordingly.

Furthermore, the findings showed that teachers found it challenging to teach English spelling explicitly when no specific time had been allocated to it. As spelling is just one component of English language instruction, it is left to the teacher's discretion how much time and how many activities can be sacrificed to spelling instruction. Teachers found themselves squeezing in activities and using time from other periods to ensure their intended goals for systematic spelling instruction were met. It was therefore a challenge to ensure that explicit instruction occurred and ample opportunity was provided to apply the new knowledge.

The case study revealed that teachers employed different kinds of activities like dictation, cloze, dictionary work, building sentences, reading comprehension and rhyming to reinforce skill transfer. These methods were found to be beneficial in guiding learners to apply the target sound accurately.

Another challenge faced by the teachers was how to deal with sight words. Teachers made an exception when dealing with these words which will be discussed in detail later.

5.2.1.2. Spelling and reading

It was found that teachers believed that the explicit teaching of spelling also benefits learners' reading ability. Spelling is directly linked to reading success (Barberio-Kitts et al., 2014). In Table 4.5 in the previous chapter, one of the benefits as perceived by the teachers highlights that "*children can discover patterns as you make them aware of the sounds in words, and they match it to its letter pattern*". This is in line with the statement by Moats and Foorman (2009) that explicit code instruction brings about knowledge of the link between phonemes (speech

sounds) and graphemes (the letters and letter groups, such as /th/ that spell the phonemes) and the application of that knowledge when reading words. The findings advocate that teaching phonics systematically enables the recognition, learning and use of English spelling patterns; this is supported by Graham et al. (2008). It was found that spelling instruction provides the cornerstones for reading, therefore it is accepted that effective strategies for teaching English spelling will definitely influence reading skill. The findings showed that the integrated approach applied by the teachers meant that reading and spelling were taught simultaneously. Learners benefit from this as they apply their knowledge of spelling patterns in reading activities based on the target sound. The study showed that SRS sound stories, which were often used as dictation, provided an opportunity for ample spelling and reading practice.

5.2.1.3. Other role-players

It was clear that the timetable provided no specific time for spelling, which meant that the teachers used their discretion in slotting spelling in for a few minutes every day. The Monday spelling lesson was generally the longest; thereafter it was a battle to get all the activities done in time. This led to some activities turning into homework to ensure that all the SRS follow-up lessons were completed. This required parents or caregivers ensuring that the SRS work was completed properly, which was done in partnership with the teacher. The study has revealed that teachers needed the input of parents and caregivers to assist learners after school.

It was also found that other role-players, such as publishers of educational textbooks and curriculum developers, are needed to ensure that relevant, interesting books see the light. Teachers experienced a genuine gap in the current education system with regard to levelled readers. They also found the lack of books, such as novels based on Namibian, African and world history, fiction, nonfiction and poetry for primary schools an obstacle to optimal learning. The teachers lamented the fact that no SRS books were available. An SRS series like the Janet and John series would be welcomed. Currently, booklets compiled by the teachers are used in classrooms to ensure each learner has a copy to practise the sounds they have learnt about. However, the learners become bored with the booklets after a while. The study also found that teachers are hampered in their efforts because no levelled readers based on the SRS progression of sounds are currently available.

5.2.1.4. Effect of beliefs on practice

As referred to earlier, the findings showed that teachers believe that the explicit teaching of spelling also benefits learners' reading ability. They also believed that the SRS training has

enhanced their own knowledge of English spelling. This is what had led to their commitment to the implementation of SRS methodology in the classroom. This emphasises that teacher beliefs affect classroom practice.

**5.2.2. Research question 2:
What adjustments, if any, did teachers make to ensure that the Sound Reading System as a spelling programme is indeed appropriate for Namibia?**

5.2.2.1. Curriculum alignment

The newly revised syllabi for Grades 1, 2 and 3 have elaborate requirements regarding English as a first or second language (see Appendix L). Findings showed that the teachers applied the SRS as a spelling methodology within the curricular framework. Although the phonics progression in the SRS is not in the same order as that stipulated in the syllabi, the curriculum permits alternative methodologies. Therefore, it is perceived as parallel to the intended outcomes for language development. The syllabi specify that digraphs like *wh, ch, th, sh*, and two-letter blends *st, sp, sl* (like in star, stand, stick/spell, spin, spill, spend / slap, sling) and three-letter blends *squ* (squirt, squirrel, squash) *thr* (thrill, thrush, three) and consonant clusters (*br, br, cr, cl, dr, fl, fr*) should be mastered by the end of Grade 3. In contrast to teaching so many different sounds, the SRS teaches one sound. The individual sounds in a word are taught and the complex English spelling system is taught in simple, logical steps, building up from common to rare spellings. The Namibian curriculum requires compensatory teaching or learning support to occur within lessons to cater for learners with learning difficulties. It was consequently found that SRS as a spelling methodology is designed to enhance incremental learning and, in this study, was applied as a learning support approach. It was also employed as a learning support tool for learners with learning difficulties, which is in line with the Namibian curriculum.

5.2.2.2. Integrated approach to teaching in the primary years

The findings emphasise that the Junior Primary teacher has a key role to play in the holistic development of young learners through an integrated approach. This approach is concerned with connecting the subject areas of the curriculum. Therefore, handwriting and phonics were taught simultaneously. Lessons were planned and presented in a way that integrated and linked the different areas of the curriculum. Successful integration through careful planning, and even in spur-of-the-moment integration, was applied. Teachers displayed a positive and creative attitude and an awareness of the curriculum content and areas. Therefore, the target sound was

central to weekly activities which might include a creative writing activity, reading comprehension, a poem or a story. Skill transfer occurred as learners undertook dictation and reading comprehension, built sentences with target words and engaged in other reading and writing activities. The SRS teaching materials included worksheets and sound stories to practise what had been learnt about the target sound, for example the spellings of the target sound. The study indicated that the SRS methodology lends itself to adaption to an integrated approach.

5.2.2.3. Adjustments made to SRS

The SRS was applied as a whole-class strategy to teach phonemes (sounds) only and not letters. Children are taught to identify and order the sounds in words by segmenting and blending. Learners can discover patterns as they become aware of the sounds in words, and they match these sounds to their letter patterns. Teachers teach all the sounds starting with the Foundation Stage in Grade 1, then introducing Stage 1 words and through incremental teaching strive to complete the full English code at the end of Grade 3. This skill can be inculcated by building words and incorporating a change, for example from ‘and’ to ‘sand’ to ‘hand’ to ‘had’. An SRS lesson includes building and writing words, processing sounds, spelling and reading (of a sound story). Sound processing is sometimes called ‘phoneme awareness’ which is an essential supporting skill for accurate spelling.

Although a typical SRS lesson occurs over one hour during a one-on-one session, it was adjusted to meet the needs of a whole-class situation. Teachers split up the activities over a one- or two-week period to ensure that all components of SRS teaching were addressed.

Although the SRS method was developed in England as an intervention to help flawed readers, the teachers found it suitable for teaching English spelling in Namibia, apart from one minor adjustment based on a difference in pronunciation. In England, *wash* and *wasp* are pronounced with an /o/ sound, like *wosp* and *wosh* which is not the case in Namibia, where people pronounce the **a** in *wash* as the sound /a/. Therefore, teachers did not teach the **a**-spelling for the sound /o/. Instead, the teachers decided to teach the sound /o/ with the spelling **o** and **au** as in *cot* and *sauce* and designed another worksheet accordingly. For the sake of uniformity all teachers agreed to this.

As mentioned earlier, the teachers made an adjustment regarding sight words. They believed that the methodology did not adequately address how to teach the spelling or reading of sight

words, therefore they applied another strategy to deal with this. In the SRS, most sight words are taught within their sound group, for example in /ee/, sight words like *be, she, tree, three, we*, are taught. However, the findings showed that teachers applied a whole-word approach to teach these high frequency words rather than to follow the SRS progression of sounds. The reason for this was that teachers were convinced that it would take too long, leading to a delay in mastering the spellings of the most frequently used words in text.

The SRS was perceived as a tedious programme which demands commitment to working through all the segmenting, blending, sound processing, and spelling and reading activities while still having other curricular requirements to fulfil in language teaching. The method can become boring and some sound stories are not very entertaining. These were challenges the teachers had to combat with their creativity and commitment.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1. Universities and other teacher training institutions

To tackle any job requires certain skills and knowledge; therefore, it is recommended that the training of teachers be viable and feasible. Learners need to be trained to hear or be aware of the individual sounds in words and the movability of sounds (e.g. the sound /m/ can be at the beginning of a word, in the middle or at the end: '*mom*', '*him*', '*jump*'). This implies that teachers need to be trained in the same concepts in order to teach this skill effectively to learners. Hayward et al. (2014) emphasise that studies over the past two decades have exposed the inadequate training of most teachers regarding English phonological awareness. Hayward et al. (2014) maintain that adequate knowledge of English empowers teachers to deliver more effective instruction. The in-service training and prior-service training of teachers needs a revamp in Namibia and the provision of adequate resources such as levelled readers in schools is essential. There is also a need for more interaction and coordination between teacher training institutions, the Ministry of Education and schools to establish the gaps and to act proactively. It is recommended that a holistic approach be followed throughout the training of teachers similar to that expected of teachers during the Junior Primary Phase. It is also recommended that subject content in teacher training modules be linked to curricular outcomes in the primary school to ensure that the teacher is equipped to meet the requirements of the job.

5.3.2. Curriculum developers

Curriculum developers need to consider current research and trends, as well as endorse methodology that has been scientifically proven. Curricula need to stipulate the exact time allocated for each component of English language to ensure that literacy skills are regarded as high priority. It is recommended that more guidelines be provided with regard to the allocation of time for assessment and spelling in the timetable. Curricular benchmarks should be linked to scientifically based findings. Be specific when formulating goals, providing training on the implementation of curricula and monitoring the process continuously while providing support.

5.3.3. Textbook publishers

Prescribed learner books ensure uniformity throughout schools, benefit learners who change schools and make monitoring of books easier. For example, three books for English could be provided, including spelling and vocabulary, language study, and writing. Standardised tests are written in higher grades, so why not in the lower grades to provide definite benchmarks for learner performance at the end of the Junior Primary Phase. Standardised spelling tests should be considered to ensure that all learners are assessed in the same way throughout the country.

Another important aspect to keep in mind is that once these concepts are taught, ample opportunity should be provided to apply them, and textbook publishers need to streamline such activities. Skill transfer can only occur if the opportunity exists for learners to apply their knowledge.

It is recommended that textbook publishers cater for differentiation when compiling classroom and homework activities. It should also be borne in mind that for many teachers in the rural areas the textbook is their primary teaching tool; however, these will only have a positive effect on learning if they adhere to the curricular needs. The Internet and other infrastructure are not readily available throughout the country and publishers often overlook this fact.

5.4. SUGGESTIONS

5.4.1. Teachers

Teachers taught the sound spellings from the basic to the complex. Although the SRS does not address the issue of sight words soon enough, it is still an avenue worth pursuing. It can be deduced from teachers' comments that before the SRS training they were left to their own devices. Although the manuals provide many ideas and suggestions, unfortunately none

comprise a systematic approach of the entire English code. It is suggested that one sound be taught rather than two- and three-letter blends.

- It is suggested that Stage 2 of the SRS be continued in Grade 4 to teach the full range of spellings and advanced multi-syllable work. This can then be extended or revised in Grade 5 to consolidate the understanding of English orthography.
- It is suggested that teachers be taught to implement scientific methods in their classrooms and that they be made aware of how imperative it is to operate as a reflective practitioner to ensure that teaching remains viable.
- It is suggested that teachers establish partnerships with parents to enhance a cooperative relationship. The entire nation needs to take ownership of education and its goals.
- It is further suggested that, when teaching sight words, teachers apply SRS principles as far as possible. This implies explaining the English alphabet code, for example **she is made up of sounds /sh/ and /ee/**. However, the number of words to memorise should be limited and the list should be handed out to show learners how to apply the code, for example **she** as /sh/ + /ee/, **to** as /t/ + /oo/, instead of overloading the learner's memory, which can cause unnecessary anxiety and stress.

The crux of SRS implementation lies in modelling lessons, explicit instruction and guided practice, which ideally require an initial high level of teacher involvement. This should be gradually reduced as the skill is mastered.

- It is suggested that if current teaching is not informed by science-based methodology, it urgently needs to be adapted accordingly. Attitudes and beliefs need to be adjusted first before changes can be made to practice. It is also important to remember that programme training and programme fidelity are essential to ensure the effective implementation of the methodology.

5.4.2. Call for further research

This case study has revealed that teachers operated with a Monday list written as a test on Friday. One teacher opted to move away from this practice and used selected spelling activities for assessment, while the other two teachers were rethinking their current practice. No specific guidelines are provided in the curriculum and syllabi on how to assess English spelling. Could it be that standardised spelling tests offer a viable option?

This study calls for more research on the effective assessment of English spelling regarding the weighting of spelling tests and the procedure for conducting such tests. This may guide teachers and ensure an equal education opportunity for all learners. Scientifically proven methods of assessment are needed to enhance spelling evaluation. During the primary school years, assessment is regarded as a tool for improving current practice, therefore it is important that assessment be done purposefully. How can we improve something if we are still not sure whether that something was measured truthfully?

5.5. CONCLUSION

This research was motivated by the poor performance of learners in English spelling and was aimed at providing information on how SRS, a scientifically proven method, can improve spelling ability. Furthermore, it hoped to enhance an understanding of English orthography.

In line with other research done in Namibia (Frans, 2014), this research found that English as the medium of instruction was introduced in education immediately after independence in 1990 and that since then, problems experienced with English are regarded as a major factor in poor learner achievement at schools. Frans (2014) has called on all stakeholders in education and the entire Namibian nation to intervene. In reply to Frans's call, this case study provides feedback on the implementation of the SRS methodology, which offers insights on the English writing system. Since very few teachers in Namibia are native speakers of English, it is time that English should be regarded in its non-native context and the problem should be tackled at its root – at the foundation stage in the primary school.

The first research question concerned the benefits and limitations of teaching spelling by applying the SRS. This was answered in detail and among the benefits identified were a better understanding of English orthography for both the teacher and the learners and the skills were practised that assist in the development of reading and writing skills, such as phonemic awareness and syllabification. Applying this system in classrooms provided teachers with a systematic approach to teaching spelling in incremental steps. Of course, some challenges were experienced, such as how to go about sight-word teaching and keeping lessons entertaining, but with careful planning and integration, teachers were able to compile an effective year plan.

The second and final research question was about the adjustments that teachers had made to ensure that the SRS as a spelling programme is indeed appropriate for Namibia. The findings showed that the programme was employed as a whole-class instruction method instead of being

individual-based. The typical one-hour lessons in the SRS were thus spread over the English periods for one or two weeks and some activities were completed at home. There was one worksheet (/o/ sound, as discussed earlier) which teachers had agreed to adapt to ensure optimal learning. Sight words were taught as whole words and an integrated approach was followed. Therefore, target sounds were central to language teaching. Dictation, dictionary work, comprehension, rhyming and reading all took place with the target sound as the central theme.

Although English is the official language of Namibia, it is imperative to realise that it is taught to the majority of its Namibian speakers through formal education. It is therefore time to increase the efficacy of how English is conveyed during the first three years of school.

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Appendix A: Ethical clearance certificate



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

17 February 2016

Ref : **2016/02/17/36576158/321/MC**

Student : Ms JM Jansen

Student Number : 36576158

Dear Ms Jansen

Decision: Ethics Approval

Researcher

Ms JM Jansen

Tel: 0926 481 240 2444

Email: kamatijessica@yahoo.com

Supervisor

Prof MG Ngoepe

College of Education

Department of Mathematical Education

Tel: +2712 429 8375

Email: ngoepe@unisa.ac.za

Proposal: Exploring the teaching of Grade 1-3 English spelling using the Sound Reading System: A case study of a Namibian school

Qualification: M Ed in Curriculum and Instructional Studies

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted for the duration of the research.

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee on 17 February 2017.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the College of Education Ethics Review Committee.*

An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for



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the research participants.

- 3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

Note:

The reference number **2016/02/17/36576158/31/MC** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants, as well as with the College of Education RERC.

Kind regards,



Dr M Claassens

CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
mcdtc@netactive.co.za



Prof VI McKay
EXECUTIVE DEAN

Appendix B: Letter requesting permission from the director to conduct research

Title: Exploring the teaching of Grade 1-3 English spelling using the Sound Reading System: A case of a Namibian primary school.

Erongo Region: Education

The Director

Mr. Awaseb

Dear Sir

I, Jessica Jansen am doing research under the supervision of Professor M. Ngoepe, a lecturer in the Department of Education towards a M Ed. at the University of South Africa. Hereby I would like to ask permission to conduct the study at Duneside High School, Walvis Bay, Erongo Region. I selected this school because the teachers have had received training in Sound Reading System (SRS) and implemented this system in their teaching.

The aim of the study is to provide awareness of how using the SRS in teaching English spelling in Grade 1, 2 and 3 in Namibia can provide possible improvement in the spelling skills of the learners.

The study will entail observation of the spelling lessons in Grade 1, 2 and 3, focus group interviews with the teachers and interviews with two learners from each grade. The researcher will also study the learner spelling books and tests to get a better understanding of how SRS is implemented.

The benefits of this study are to provide feedback to the concerned bodies (curriculum designers, textbook publishers, teachers, researchers and parents) to help them improve the teaching/learning process of English spelling in schools and to emphasize the link between spelling and reading.

There are no foreseeable risks and confidentiality is ensured.

Feedback procedure will entail the researcher's communication of the outcomes of the result to all the teachers of this study.

Yours sincerely

.....

Jessica Jansen

Student number: **36576158**

Researcher

Cell nr: 0812402444

Ref # **2016/02/17/36576158/4321/MC**

Student#: Ms JM Jansen

Student Number#: 36576158

Appendix C: Letter requesting permission from the principal to conduct research

Title: Exploring the teaching of Grade 1-3 English spelling using the Sound Reading System: A case of a Namibian primary school.

Erongo Region: Education

Duneside High School

The Principal

Mrs. Einbeck

Dear Madam

I, Jessica Jansen am doing research under the supervision of Professor M. Ngoepe, a lecturer in the Department of Education towards a M Ed. at the University of South Africa. Hereby I would like to ask permission to conduct the study at your school, Duneside High School, Walvis Bay, Erongo Region. I selected this school because the teachers have had received training in Sound Reading System (SRS) and implemented this system in their teaching.

The aim of the study is to provide awareness of how using the SRS in teaching English spelling in Grade 1, 2 and 3 in Namibia can provide possible improvement in the spelling skills of the learners.

The study will entail observation of the spelling lessons in Grade 1, 2 and 3, focus group interviews with the teachers and interviews with two learners from each grade. The researcher will also study the learner spelling books and tests to get a better understanding of how SRS is implemented.

The benefits of this study are to provide feedback to the concerned bodies (curriculum designers, textbook publishers, teachers, researchers and parents) to help them improve the teaching/learning process of English spelling in schools and to emphasize the link between spelling and reading.

There are no foreseeable risks and confidentiality is ensured. The information will not be disclosed to the general public without your prior approval and anonymity is ensured.

Feedback procedure will entail the researcher's communication of the outcomes of the result to all the teachers of this study, including your office.

Kindly find attached the permission letter from the Director.

Yours sincerely

.....

Jessica Jansen

Student number: **36576158**

Researcher

Cell nr: 0812402444

Ref # **2016/02/17/36576158/4321/MC**

Appendix D: Letter requesting a teacher to participate in a focus interview based on research

Title: Exploring the teaching of Grade 1-3 English spelling using the Sound Reading

System: A case of a Namibian primary school.

Dear Madam

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I, Jessica Jansen, am conducting as part of my research as a master's student entitled **Exploring the teaching of Gr 1 -3 English spelling using the Sound Reading System: A case study of a Namibian school** at the University of South Africa.

Permission for the study has been given by the director and the principal and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience and expertise related to my research topic.

I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you should agree to take part. The importance of spelling in education is substantial and well documented. The aim of the study is to provide awareness of how using the SRS in teaching English spelling in Grade 1, 2 and 3 in Namibia can provide possible improvement in the spelling skills of the learners.

The study will entail observation of the spelling lessons in Grade 1, 2 and 3, focus group interviews with the teachers and interviews with two learners from each grade. The researcher will also study the learner spelling books and tests to get a better understanding of how SRS is implemented.

The benefits of this study are to provide feedback to the concerned bodies (curriculum designers, textbook publishers, teachers, researchers and parents) to help them improve the teaching/learning process of English spelling in schools and to emphasize the link between spelling and reading.

There are no foreseeable risks and confidentiality is ensured.

In this interview, I would like to have your views and opinions on this topic. This information can be used to improve current spelling methods in Namibia.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 40-60 minutes in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location at a time convenient to you. I would also observe the spelling lessons for four weeks to see how the system is implemented during spelling lessons.

You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or to clarify any points. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for 12 months in my locked room. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 0812402444 or by e-mail at kamatijessica@yahoo.com Thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

If you accept my invitation to participate, kindly sign the consent form on the next page.

Yours sincerely

Jessica Jansen

Student number: **36576158**

Researcher

Cell nr: 0812402444

Appendix E: Permission from Erongo Regional Council



ERONGO REGIONAL COUNCIL

DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION

Telephone : 064-4105101
Fax : 064-4105136
E-mail: dirsec@moe.org.na

Private Bag 5024
SWAKOPMUND

Enquiries : Mr. J. /Awaseb
Date : 16 March 2015

Ms. Jessica Jansen
P O Box 2197
WALVIS BAY

Madam,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

Your request to conduct research at Duneside High School in Walvis Bay has reference.

Your request has been considered and approved on the following conditions:

1. The principal of Duneside High School should be approach for finer details and the processes involved.
2. The normal school programme should not be interrupted.

We wish you success with your studies/research.

Kind regards



J. /AWASEB

REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Appendix F: Permission from the principal

Dear Jessica Jansen

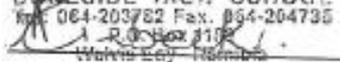
Permission to conduct research

I have received your request to conduct a research at our school, and have the pleasure of informing you that permission to investigate how we have implemented the SRS method in teaching English spelling in Grade 1, 2 and 3 at our school is hereby granted.

You are however reminded that learning and teaching time must be adhered to and not be compromised.

I wish you all the best with your studies and look forward to get the results of you research.

Yours faithfully

A. Einbeck
DUNESIDE HIGH SCHOOL
Tel: 064-203782 Fax: 064-204735

Principal

Principal

Appendix G: Consent form

I have read the information presented in the information letter about the study in education. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and add any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses. I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous. I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher. With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Participant's Name (Please print):

Participant's Signature:

Jessica Jansen

Student number: **36576158**

Researcher

Cell no: 0812402444

Date:

FOCUS GROUP/INTERVIEW ASSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I _____ grant consent/assent that the information I share during the group discussions (focus group interviews) may be used by the researcher, [name of researcher], for research purposes. I am aware that the group discussions will be digitally recorded and grant consent/assent for these recordings, provided that my privacy will be protected. I undertake not to divulge any information that is shared in the group discussions to any person outside the group in order to maintain confidentiality.

Participant's Name (Please print):

Participant's Signature:

Jessica Jansen

Student number: **36576158**

Researcher

Cell no: 0812402444

Date:

Appendix H: First draft of interview guide

- 1. Describe how you feel about English Spelling and the teaching thereof. Do you feel overwhelmed, well trained, well prepared, enthusiastic about teaching English Spelling? How many periods of English are in a week/cycle? How many are allocated to spelling?*
- 2. How would you describe the SRS method of teaching spelling?*
- 3. In your opinion, what are the advantages to using the Sound Reading System over traditional spelling methods?*
- 4. Do you see any disadvantages to using the Sound Reading System? What are they?*
- 5. Do you feel the Sound Reading System contributes to reading, writing, and spelling success? How so?*
- 6. Do you observe students transferring their new knowledge to the areas of reading, writing, and spelling?*
- 7. Where do you get the words from that you use for spelling with your students?*
- 8. Do you use any other resources besides the Sound Reading System? Elaborate please.*
- 9. Did you have to adjust some aspects of the Sound Reading System to make it relevant for Namibia or is it a perfect fit?*
- 10. Would you change anything about the programme or and what would it be?*
- 11. How do you teach sight words?*

Appendix I: Sight words as set out in manual (NIED, 2015)

Below is a list of sight words for English as a first language in each grade (based on the Dolch list of high frequency sight words) Grade 1 (90+) Grade 2 (130+) Grade 3 (180)

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
the to and a I you it in said for up look is go we little down can see not one my me big come blue red where jump away here help make yellow two play run find three funny he was that she on they but at with all there out be have am do did what so get like this will yes went are now no came ride into good want too pretty four saw well ran brown eat who new must black white soon our ate say under please	of his had him her some as then could when were them ask an over just from any how know put take every old by after think let going walk again may stop fly round give once open has live thank	would very your its around don't right green their call sleep five wash or before been off cold tell work first does goes write always made gave us buy those use fast pull both sit which read why found because best upon these sing wish many

Sight Words for English as a Second Language Grade 1 (40+) Grade 2 (90+) Grade 3 (150+)

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
the to and a I you it in said for up look is go we little down can see not one my me big come blue red where jump away here help make yellow two play run find three funny so have with were	he was that she on they but at with all there out be have is in when my our of the it can am do did what so get like this will yes went are now no came ride into good want too over time pretty four must black saw well ran brown eat who new under please play white soon our ate say	of his had him her some as then could when were them ask an over just from any how know put take every old by after think let going walk again may stop fly round give once open has live thank would very your its around don't right sleep five wash or before been off cold tell work first does goes write their call green

Appendix J: Observations

Grade 3

Lesson introduction

A new sound was presented (ee) and its five spellings were introduced ee/ea/e/ey/y

Teacher asked what learners could hear as she sounded out *h-a-p-p-y*. Learners say the word and then practice some more words that the teacher sounds out. After teacher showed the different spellings (she wrote in on the board), she asked learners for words containing that spelling of the sound /ee/ give words with correct spelling which teacher lists in the correct spelling on the board. Teacher writes sound spellings in another colour and highlighted it in the words provided by the children. Board display looks like this:

ee	ea	e	ey	y
beef	eat	me	donkey	happy

Content

After explaining the different spellings and asking a few learners to sound it out, the teacher sounds out a few and ask what learners can hear. Then displays this on the board in colourful chalk:

h a pp **y**
s **ee**
h **e**
m o nk **ey**
b **ea** ch

Hereby she showed the different spellings for /ee/. Teacher handed out two worksheets. Worksheet 1 required the learner to sound out the word and copy it on the sound line. For example, **easy = 4 letters but only 3 sounds** _ _ _ , the answer is **ea s y** . Remind learners to capitalise - proper nouns.

Worksheet 2 required the learner to look at a word list and spot the sound, highlight it and write it down under the correct heading, in similar fashion to what the teacher did. Most learners did what was expected from them with ease. Some learners skipped the sounding out part and merely copied the words on the sound lines. These learners did not follow the teacher's instructions. She explained to them that if they skip this important step, they will easily forget.

Skill application

Learners completed two worksheets and sounded out the words on worksheet 1.

Teaching aids

Chalkboard, worksheets.

Evaluation

Learners were able to complete the task at hand. Selected activities (cloze, dictation and dictionary work) were used as assessment.

End of cycle observation

Learners had adequate exercises to practice their new skill. Classroom based activities as well as homework. SRS- worksheets were handed out and SRS-stories were used, in this case, Sally the green sheep was used to spot the sound/ee/. In the next grade which is Grade 4, SRS is mainly employed as learning support for those learners who are struggling. Teacher told learners that Sally is having bread with cream and peaches for tea is a way people in England refers to having snack time. And not that it means Sally drinks the bread! Teachers acknowledged that the new curriculum allows teachers to follow their own progression of sounds, provided that all the sounds are eventually covered for the year and that year plans are developed accordingly.

Grade 2

Lesson introduction

Quick revision of the sh sound where 2 letters represented one sound. A new sound was introduced (th), 2 letters for one sound.

Learners say the sound and write the spellings of the sound in the air as the teacher says it. After teacher showed the spelling and how th can sound different but it is spelled the same. (she wrote on the board, th in think and th in there), she asked learners for more /th/ words. Teacher writes th sound in another colour and highlighted it in the words provided by the children. Board display looks like this:

the thing there them thank that this they their think Thursday thumb.

Then teacher asked learners to distinguish between the fuzzy *th* and the clear *th*.

Now the list looks like this.

the there them that this they their vs think Thursday thing think thank

Content

Teacher asked a few learners to sound out the words on the board. Teacher emphasised that although it is one sound it is made up of two letters. the teacher handed out two worksheets. Worksheet 1 required the learner to sound out the word and copy it on the sound line. For example, **with = 4 letters but only 3 sounds** _ _ _ , the answer is **w i th**.

Worksheet 2 required the learner to look at a word list and then label each picture with the most suitable words from the list e.g a picture of a robber = thug. The learners who completed both worksheets started with a th -word search.

Skill application

Learners completed two worksheets and sounded out the words on worksheet 1. Then learners read *Moths*, a story where their newly acquired skills are applied.

Teaching aids

Chalkboard, worksheets, word search.

Evaluation

Learners were able to complete the tasks on time. Three learners struggled to distinguish between the two th-sounds. Then the teacher said they must think of *them* and *thunder* and the beginning sound of each word. And she told them to think about where their tongues

press when saying the two words. Test was written about the words as agreed upon by the teacher and learners.

End of cycle observation

Learners had adequate exercises to practice their new skill. Classroom based activities as well as homework. SRS- worksheets were handed out and SRS-stories were used, in this case, a story about a moth was used to practice the /th/ sound. Small group activities worked very well, it takes planning but the teacher handled it well. Three groups each doing one activity. Group 1 do segmenting and blending worksheet on the carpet with the teacher. Group Two do sound spotting and Group 3 do sound sorting. Then the groups rotated.

In the next grade which is Grade 3, some sounds will be repeated as revision early in the first term before the teacher continues with the next sound as these SRS-sounds are arranged systematically. This practice also benefits new learners who join the school in Grade 2 or 3. Teacher B2 said that the learners tend to become bored with these stories and therefore she also hands out Janet and John books for further reading.

Grade 1

Lesson introduction

A new sound was introduced and written on the board. Teacher says; “We are learning about the **i** –sound today. “

Learners say the sound and give words containing this sound. ...dig kick hit I pig sit fist big. Teacher explains that the sound /i /can be like the **i** in **I** or **i** in **in** or **i** in **sit**. Teacher paste i- word charts on the board and say it. Learners repeat after her.

Teacher: What sound are we learning about today?

Learners: the **i** –sound.

Content

After explaining the different ways to pronounce **i** , teacher focuses on the word charts on the board. Teacher sounds out the words and learners repeat after her as she holds up each letter chart e.g. teacher holds up p, then n i. then g, and learners blend it together as p-i-g =pig.

Then teacher asked learners to write the p in the air, the i and the g. This word is accompanied by a picture of the pig.

The next activity involves the teacher mixing up letters, she paste the pig on the board and asked the learners. What sound are we learning about? They respond -i. The teacher draws three sound lines _ _ _ then asks for the answer. Learners segment and blend. The learners then do this as a written activity in their books after writing a line of i's in lower case and a line in appercase. This is to incorporate handwriting skills.

Skill application

Learners completed the oral activity and then the written activity in their books. Teacher supports those who seemed unsure. Pronunciation is practiced Teacher writes words on board and asks. Look at this word **i** like in sit but we say **i** like in in.

Teaching aids

Chalkboard, worksheets, word charts with pictures.

Evaluation

Learners were able to complete the task at hand. Tasks also started with easy activities which increased gradually in difficulty.

End of cycle observation

Learners had adequate exercises to practice their new skill. Classroom based activities as well as homework. SRS- worksheets were handed out and SRS-stories were used, in this case, learners listened to *A pig sat in a pig pen*, to practice the sound/i/. In the next grade which is grade 2, some sounds are repeated as revision and the teacher continues with the next sound according to how these SRS-sounds are arranged systematically. A foundation booklet is handed out, consisting of stories made up of the sound that learners have mastered and some sight words. This is the first reader. After the Foundation stories, the teacher allows learners to read a book from the shelf (Janet and John series).

Appendix K: Focus group interview transcription

Researcher: Good afternoon teachers, I am grateful for this opportunity to have this interview with you as a group. As a student at Unisa my dissertation involves a case study on implementing SRS in the primary grades. My questions are thus based on the implementation process of SRS in your classrooms.

There are ten periods allocated to English. SRS promotes one hour- long lessons; How do you make it work?

B1: I use every 10 min in the first period of the day for spelling. During the rest of the week, I give clear instructions based on what we did for Monday's spelling lesson. Then we continue with the grammar or language study or creative writing, according to the syllabus.

B2: I continue to teach and children do other work, but then I make time to hand out a SRS worksheet to ensure that learners remember the sound for the week, which was introduced at the beginning of the week. I also test it every Friday. They write tests every Friday.

B3: I teach spelling explicitly on a Monday and do smaller group/whole class activities throughout the week...sounding out, completing sound switch/spot the sound and do a sound story.

Researcher: How do you decide where to start? How do you select spelling words?

B2: I follow the SRS list as I continue with the system and add some of my own words to the list. I also look at the theme because we follow a thematic approach so say for example if we do transport in Environmental Studies, and I am busy with the /ee/ sound teaching the learners the spellings for /ee/ as **e,ee,ea,y** and **ey**; I would add *lorry, carry* and *speeding* as spelling words.

B3: Based on the sound that we are busy with, I compile a list and sometimes I add ing/ed and use those words as spelling list. I use a variety of activities.

B2: I also give an activity where learners have to use the spelling list words and construct sentences or find - the - meaning exercises.

Researcher: Thank you, what about you (B1) ma'am how do you do start?

B1: Sometimes I allow the theme to guide me, but mostly I follow SRS's progression of sounds. Then I make up my spelling list for the week based on that.

B3: It is very difficult to fit everything in that is required by the new curriculum...time is precious...and there are other subjects, each with its own demands. There is no specific time allocated to spelling... We are allowed to use our discretion so that is the gap we needed...Yes, do you think it would be better if a specific number of periods were allocated to spelling and reading? It is such important components of English.

Researcher: Integrated planning and teaching, as set out by the Ministry of Education in the Integrated Planning Manual, especially in grades one to three, should be flexible and I think the Ministry wants to emphasise learner-centeredness. Yes, I understand that it can be very challenging to implement a new curriculum...which brings me to my next question. When applying SRS as methodology, how do you cater for diverse learning ability?

B3: I ensure that there is a variety of activities, and always provide a word search or word puzzle/rhyme for those who progress fast and shows understanding. The slower ones can come back in the afternoons for one on one sessions. Then during afternoon sessions, I start with the basics; segmenting/blending. Learners literally sound out the words and build it like little puzzles and write it down.

B2: I try to challenge those who finish fast with extra sheets and I like peer-assistance where I allow those who grasped a concept to show/explain to their classmates...quite useful sometimes. I also make the font bigger as part of learning support...

Researcher: Ok, and you, ma'am? (looking at B1)

B1: Well, fast learners get more challenging worksheets and slower learners do simpler work. They are not grouped that way. I try not to make it too obvious...children are sensitive...They sit in random groups. From the random groups I sometimes call out the slower ones for carpet time while the rest continue with written activities. On the carpet...nobody can hide...each one gets a turn to sound out a word.

B3: The problem is just that you must design two levels of worksheets and sometimes three different levels...

Researcher: Which orthographic assessment(s) are you administering to measure student progress in spelling? How often are these administered? Is it different from how you approached it before SRS? How?

B2: I use the spelling list that we agreed on during the lesson, and read the words out loud on a Friday. I always try to use it in a sentence... I am contemplating some changes to my assessment...using these spelling tests scores can inflate the overall marks because the parents are eager to help their children to score hundred percent. I have moved on...I regard dictation as more of a consolidation activity than an assessment. I prefer to measure spelling as part of a reading comprehension and creative written work where learners apply what they have learned. I don't know how, but I am working on how to change my assessments.

B3: That makes sense, the high scores can give a false picture, because sometimes you do get crazy spellings of words that was dealt with before. Perhaps we can work on a new assessment tool together... I always reward compound words and colourful descriptions with perfect spelling. I am compiling a score based on three or four activities like cloze, dictionary work, adding a prefix or suffix, add a vowel and build a new word, homophones and such. But I used to do the mandatory list and read each word to the learners. I think I hated it as much as they did.

B1: I also used to do the list -thing. Now I give all the letters, but scrambled. The learners would have to reorder it. Then something more advanced...I just give the sound lines and a visual clue. Then I give just the sound lines and read out the words, making sure that everybody can hear me and that each word is used in a sentence. I also love cloze activities and then I provide a word bank or visual clues. The children love a cross word puzzle with visual clues.

Researcher: Please give examples of how learners transfer their new skills in other areas of writing and reading?

B3: The learners have all the activities...the cloze, build a sentence, write a rhyme, find a rhyming word. I believe they transfer their knowledge to their written work and because the spelling is interrelated to reading like we say /s/ when the c is followed by e,i or y like in *cell*, *circle* or *cycle*, the reading also improves as the spelling does.

B1: I can agree with that ... They do transfer their skill...I can hear how they correct themselves as they grapple with words where a sound switching takes place...like the /i/ in **I**, **in** and **sit**.

B2: In my class I also ask learners to build sentences with the spelling words, and when answering reading comprehension, they show off their spelling ability. I absolutely believe that this explicit teaching improves their approach to reading as well.

Researcher: What did you change about the SRS methodology? Can you tell us if you made any changes? (Looking at B2)

B 2: Well, in England they speak of *wosh* and *wosp*..but here in Namibia we say *wash* and *wasp*... and this is not indicated as such (*wash*, *wasp*) in SRS materials, but as *wosh* and *wosp*. Therefore, another worksheet is made to cater for our pronunciation. This is for the sound /o/ as in *hot* and in the SRS worksheets it is regarded as an /o/ sound with two spellings, like **o** in *mop* or **a** in **was wash wasp watch want swan** and **swap**. I taught the children /o/ is spelled as **o** in **stop** and **au** in **sauce**. This was the only worksheet that we've adapted by excluding the a-spelling.

B3: Yes, we all agreed to regard the spelling for /o/ as **o** or **au**. In a few of the sound - stories some of the expressions are a bit foreign like...Jen and Mom had bread and plums for tea...We drink tea and it doesn't refer to a snack, but to a hot drink....so I always explained that sometimes in England people refer to a "snack time or a coffee break" as tea..just like we speak of tomato sauce and on TV we hear of ketchup...chips/ fries. I make it interesting and do a whole activity on people 's different habits all over the world. I also changed some stories like instead of Sally the green sheep, the character became Sally the greedy sheep. It makes more sense.

B1: I integrated silent letters and sight words as part of the spelling programme...well it is stated in the curriculum and SRS does not even refer to silent letters at all... So I taught knee as **kn** = /n/ and **ee**= knee 4 letters and two sounds. There is no other way... some words must be learned as whole words. And remember as we progress with the sounds we come across many sight words, so I teach it as we progress. Like when we are done with the sounds **t,o,p,m,a,n,c,d,i**, it means we are done with sight words like *I*, *am*, *and*, *in*, *to*, *at* and after we add **g,b,d** we built *go*, *be*, *got* and so we progress. But a word like *the* I teach as a whole

word, it would take too long to wait for all the sight words to come along within their sound group as expected when you teach through SRS.

Researcher to B3: And you how do you teach sight words? Is your current approach different from how you taught spelling before using SRS?

B3: I have adopted the CCC method, whereby learners copy the sight word, cover it, write it out and check it. It works for me! If they can recall the word, it must be working... I also teach sight words as whole words. I must say that before SRS I just handed out a list, build sentences and wrote a Friday test. SRS has made me more aware of sounds and of how to give it to the learner.

B2: I also do the whole word thing...what else is there to do? At least now, after the training I understand why /au/ words can sound so different like aunt and sauce...au used to be a nightmare to me. I could not answer the children when they asked me why? It is so simple...it is two different sounds spelled in the same way! Still, some words you cannot break down, and those sight words like **one** should be taught as whole words.

B1: I was a bit overwhelmed and not really keen on teaching spelling. English is not my first language and during teacher training we did not really focus much on how to teach spelling, much less English spelling. I must admit it was basically reduced to a one day of the week lesson, it is only now that I have come to understand that it is a systematic process. I used random words in my spelling lists, from the Internet like frequently misspelled words or homophones...sometimes theme related words.

Researcher: In your opinion, what are the strengths of using the Sound Reading System?

B3: I like most that children can discover patterns as you make them aware of the sounds in words, and they match it to its letter pattern... and that *c* followed by *i* is pronounced *s*... They love that lightbulb moment...and I love that light in their eyes when they've grasped a concept.

B2: It makes spelling and reading easier to teach. There is a system in place... I just follow it. Teaching aids are cheap...no fancy or expensive equipment. If you can make copies, you are ready for class. Of course you still have to prepare...laugh

B1: The fact that children can make sense of it all...understanding to segment/blend...I myself learned about most of the different sounds only now when I receiving SRS training and I felt so empowered, how much more does a child feel when gaining understanding?

Researcher: In your opinion what are the weaknesses of using the Sound Reading System?

B3: It is a lot of work for the teacher. One can easily slip into your old ways and just grab a worksheet that requires learners to fill in the correct word...or give a random list of words for spelling. But SRS made me aware that thoughtful activities that elicit understanding are more likely to produce better results than enforcing skills like memorisation and guessing. It does not say what to do with high frequency words and sight words as we know it traditionally and silent letters...that is a bit frustrating.

B1: Well, you have to sit and do a year plan because the year plans in the Integrated Planning Manual do not follow SRS. It entails a lot of work. But once you have done it you can use that in the following years as well. We do it together as a team. Grade 1-3. We plan to include the Grade 0 teacher next year. Books are introduced a bit late. I think we can challenge the learners more, but SRS is designed to avoid putting a learner in a position whereby they are expected to read sounds that they have not dealt with before. Therefore, we use the SRS stories, created for SRS.

B2: It can become very boring and it is a lot of work. Being aware that you cannot ask learners about spellings/sounds you did not teach, demands that teachers scrutinise stories and all work handed out. It takes a lot of planning. It would be useful if there were levelled readers based on SRS. And some stories that the learners can relate to would have been nice.

Then the HOD entered.

Researcher: Good afternoon, ma'am. Welcome... we have reached the end of the interview but you are welcome to add what you have experienced. There are ten periods allocated to English. SRS promotes one hour- long lessons; How do you make it work?

HOD: I do not teach Grade 1, 2 and 3 anymore. I've used it as method to teach spelling and reading in Grade 1...I would introduce the sound as set out in SRS Teacher's Handbook, then learners give words that start with that specific letter and I paste up pictures of things that start with that letter. Later I made flashcards which I displayed on the board to demonstrate segmenting and blending of the word for example m/a/n = man. Then learners do that in

smaller groups, but I didn't really deal with bigger words. I've also used it as catch -up for some older learners who struggled with English reading. We use it at our school as part of compensatory teaching, as a one on one based intervention. It is our reality that English is a second, third or fourth language for most of our learners therefore we have to teach them explicitly. This becomes their reference and that is why we have such success in this regard.

Researcher: How do you decide where to start? How do you select spelling words?

HOD: That is the beauty of this system...you don't have to think how you will start and where...you just follow the system.

Researcher: How did you cater for diverse learning ability?

HOD: I added more difficult words as a challenge as the last question on the worksheet and I supported learning by being available in the afternoons for extra sessions in smaller groups/one on one. We do inclusive education so I enlarged the font to size 14 and use SRS as learning support for those who struggle.

Researcher: Please give examples of how learners transfer their new skills in other areas of writing and reading?

HOD: I always made an effort to ask the learners to use a word bank (like a cloze activity) and to choose the best word to complete a paragraph. The learners also had to write sentences with the new words and we would add a prefix un- to let them experience how the meaning and the spelling changes from do to undo...

Researcher: Which orthographic assessment(s) are you administering to measure student progress in spelling? How often are these administered? Is it different from how you approached it before SRS? How?

HOD: I used to read the words three times and let the learners write it down. Then I would mark it, and now I would use the word in a sentence and I wrote the target sound on the board, and let the children write it on their test page before we start.

Researcher: What did you change about the SRS methodology?

HOD: I taught silent letters as spellings and I taught sight words by using the whole word method. I also changed some stories like instead of Sally the green sheep, the character became Sally the greedy sheep. And I explained stories if it didn't make sense...laugh...some

things really sounded a bit strange... “have bread for tea “ And I added fun activities like puzzles, word search and riddles to make it interesting.

Researcher: What are the strengths of using the Sound Reading System?

HOD: The fact that it is a worked out plan of action. You just need to implement it.

Researcher: What are the weaknesses of using the Sound Reading System?

HOD: It demands planning and can become tiring and boring. It demands from the teacher to think out of the box and to be creative to keep herself and her learners positive and engaged in the teaching/learning process. Therefore, it is essential to maintain a steady speed...move on.

Researcher: What do you mean...move on although some children haven't grasp it...? Tell me more, please...

HOD: Not exactly...but use your professional judgement, introduce the sound, spell it and introduce the next one, once everyone has completed their worksheets and activities and move on. I am convinced that as they progress, the learners will realize that it is all parts and pieces of a bigger puzzle. The more sounds they can be exposed to, the better. The more they hear it the more they become accustomed to it and the more we expect them to apply their knowledge, the better. The more they learn and experience the English sounds, the better the chance of internalising it. They are not going to unlearn their mother tongue and as much as there can be advantages when transferring phonologic or dialectal knowledge, there can also be disadvantages, like in Afrikaans the /l/ sound is represented by the letter **l** but in English it can be **l**, **ll**, **le** or **el** and often Afrikaans students write *sample* as *sampel/sampil*. Therefore, it is imperative to have them practice what applies to English during the first three years of schooling. It will enhance their understanding in higher grades of, for example, why *interesting* is not spelled as *intresting* and another common mistake is *because* spelled as *becos*.

Researcher: Ok, thanks. Is your current approach different from how you taught spelling before using SRS?

HOD: Yes, definitely, I have learned to move faster as I teach the sounds, not to spend too much time on repetition, to allow opportunity for the learner to apply the skill, taste the success and get going. I also learned so much more about English...things I did not think

about before or realised before like the first /j/ in **judge** is the same sound as the last /j/ **dge**, it is just two different spellings for the same sound! **j-u-dge** . And that **g** is pronounced /j/ when followed by **e,i,y** like in *gym, giant, generous* ...You know, it improved the reading ability of the children. Spelling and reading are really two sides of a coin! Before the training I just stuck to the mandatory lists, hoping that I don't mess it up...But I had to specific strategy.

Thank you. Thank you, everybody for your participation. We have come to the end of this interview.

End of interview

Appendix L: Summary of curriculum requirements pertaining to English

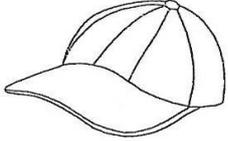
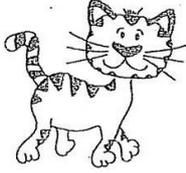
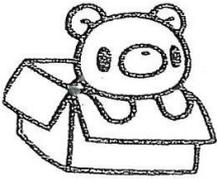
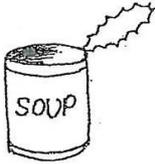
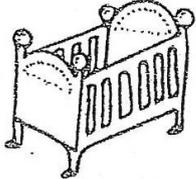
Table 5: Requirements and suggestions of the curriculum pertaining to English as First and Second language during Grade 1, 2 and 3.

Summary of curriculum requirements pertaining to English
They need to be familiar with the curriculum content and areas.
Planning is vital to successful integration
Teachers need to have a long-term, overarching plan for the year so that parts of the curriculum are not omitted
Progression is very important. The order in which the components of the subjects are taught needs to be logical and sequential
Subject components like handwriting, phonics and number concept development need to be taught in a planned, sequential manner.
This does not mean these themes have to be used in the exact order or form in which they are presented in the curriculum. Teachers might also decide to explore the topic of 'Water' in January because it is a wetter time of the year, even though in the curriculum document the topic is one of the last listed.
The purpose of both of these types of assessment is to help teachers improve their teaching and provide for a better learning experience for the learner.
Informal Assessment is based on observation, and is carried out as teachers observe all the learners during the course of all lessons or activities.
Learning areas: Listening and Responding, Speaking and Communicating, Reading and Viewing, Rhyming words, Writing Language Structure, Grammar and Language use
Over all, the progression of phonics and handwriting will have to take into consideration school policies or published schemes/programmes. For example, if the school is using THRASS (Teaching Handwriting, Reading And Spelling Skills), teachers will have a different system and order for teaching phonics and handwriting. If a teacher is using a handwriting workbook, (e.g. Pollination's publication, Handwriting in Namibia or Out of Africa's publication, Handwriting Grade 1) the scheme will have to be adjusted.
Letter formation is revised and practised at the same time as letter sounds are studied in phonics.
Integrated planning and teaching, most especially in grades one to three, must be flexible and not confined to the idea of following a subject-based timetable and fixed blocks or periods of time.

Although the timetable and the allocation of time per subject need to be taken in to account, teachers will often need to treat the timetable in a fluid and flexible manner.
In learning to read and write learners must, among other things, develop phonological awareness, an understanding of phonics, learn to recognise commonly used words and learn about and practise letter formation.
It is very important to spend much time on oral activities in the early grades.
Learners will learn to recognise and write letters as they study phonics, but other areas for handwriting practice and development are also included.
The teacher has to exercise professional discretion in deciding when it is best to convey content directly.
To develop reading readiness, learners need to become familiar with books and all kinds of texts (magazines, leaflets, comics, newspapers, etc.). They need to be able to recognise the front and the back of a book, identify the title and where one would start reading, and be able to identify letters, words, spaces between words and sentences.
Teachers will continually make small adjustments to their planning and teaching based on these observations,
The pattern of modelled, guided, shared, and independent reading/writing can be used at all grades but at different levels and with different expectations, keeping in mind the skills of the learners.
Teachers read stories to learners and model good reading practice.
They could also stop to ask learners questions to make sure they understand and are following the story. This technique is used in the early grades to instil an interest in stories and care for books.
Teachers and learners have a shared text that they can all see, (e.g. a 'Big Book', a poster or some writing on the chalkboard)
Teachers guide the reading of the learners who have their own copy of the text,
Learners are able to self-correct, understand and comment on what they are reading.
Teachers model good writing practice, often talking aloud to show the learners the 'thought processes' they go through when writing.
They use neat handwriting and check what they have written by rereading. Teachers should also model questioning aloud what they have written, asking for help or 'having a go' if they are not sure, so the learners can see that writing is a process.
They also show what should be done if a mistake is made or if a spelling is not known.
Integrated Planning This involves planning schemes of work and individual lessons in a way that integrates and links the different areas of the curriculum. Successful integration is

almost always planned and usually needs to be done well in advance although sometimes integration will happen by co-incidence and on the spur of the moment.

Appendix M: Learner activities

		
can ✓	cap ✓	cat ✓
		
in ✓	pin ✓	tin ✓
		
dot ✓	cot ✓	and ✓
		
dad ✓	dam ✓	cat ✓

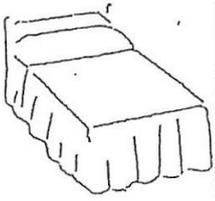
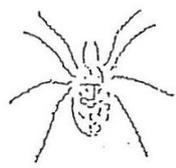
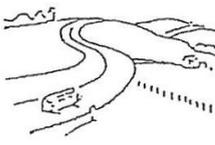
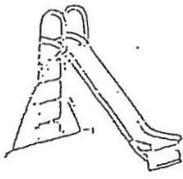
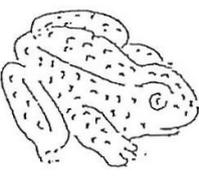
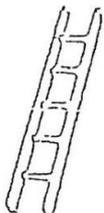
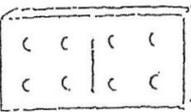
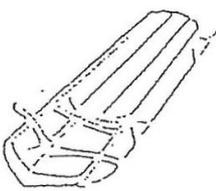
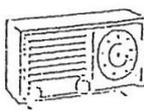
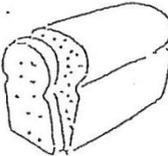
Date: _____

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Fill in **d** or **p** to make the word.

han_ be_ ca_ clou_ bir_ cu_ brea_ dust_ an_ lam_ spa_ e_ zi_ shi_ stam_ lizar_ 1 Rand

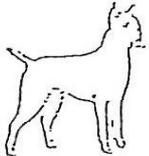
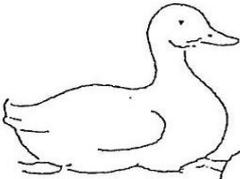
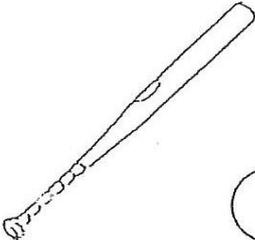
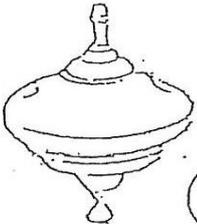
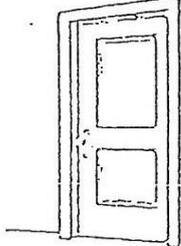
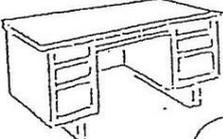
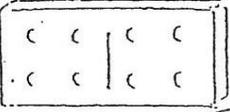
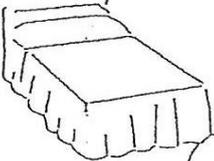
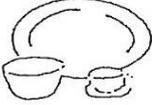
Say name of the picture. If you hear **d** at the beginning, print **d** in the first block; if in the middle, in the second block; if at the end, in the third block.

Consonant: **D d**

Dog begins with the sound of d. Mark the pictures that begin with the sound of

(d).

 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>
 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>
 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>
 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>

Monday

19 May 2016

The ck-sound

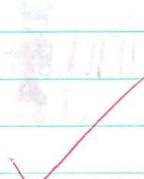
ck ck ck ck ck ck ck ck

kick 

clock 

chicken 

sick 

Jack 

black 

lick 

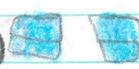
duck 

thick

lock

socks 

truck 

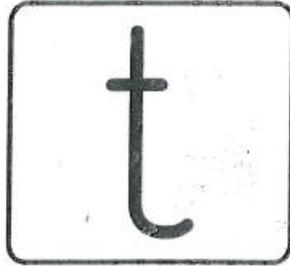
bricks 

back

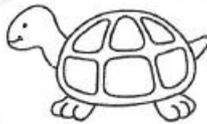
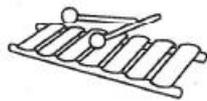
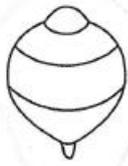
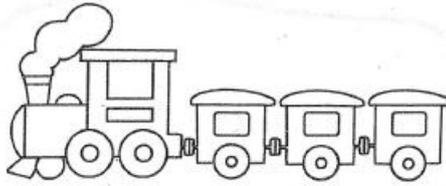
Picture page

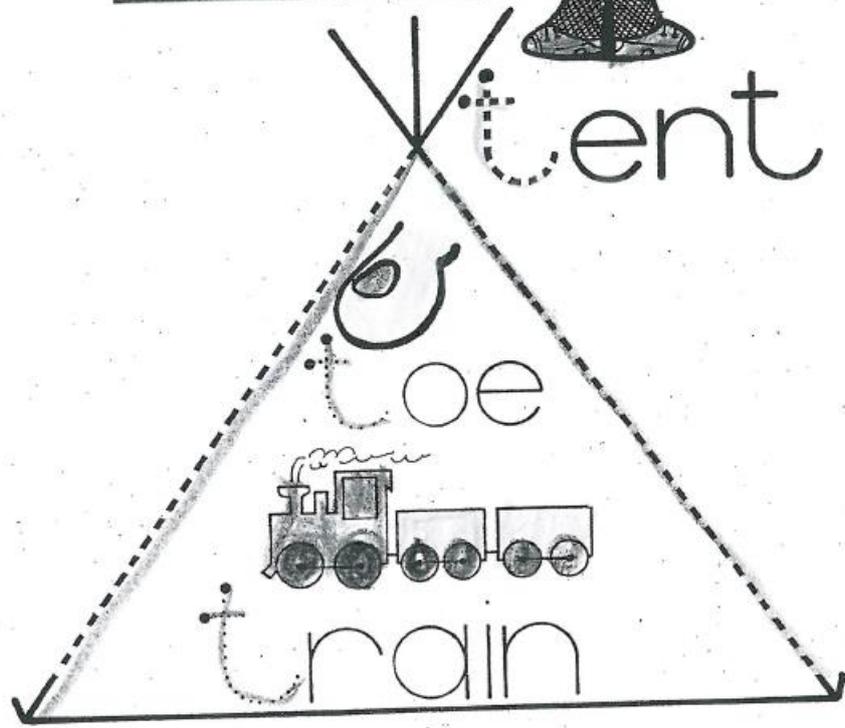
t





Find the things that begin with **t** and circle them.





Appendix N: Letter confirming editing

Alexa Barnby
Language Specialist

Editing, copywriting, indexing, formatting, translation

BA Hons Translation Studies; APEd (SATI) Accredited Professional Text Editor, SATI

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6 January 2017

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I, Alexa Kirsten Barnby, ID no. 5106090097080, a full-time language practitioner accredited by the South African Translators' Institute, have edited the master dissertation titled "Exploring the teaching of Grade 1 – 3 English spelling using the Sound Reading System: A case of a Namibian primary school" by Jessica Mary-Anne Jansen.

The onus is, however, on the author to make the changes and address the comments.

