METHODS USED FOR READING INSTRUCTION AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE BOJANALA DISTRICTS OF

NORTH WEST PROVINCE.

BY

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ABSTRACT

A plethora of studies in South Africa have examined the reading success of Grade 3 in the Foundation Phase in African Schools, but have investigated teachers' perspectives on the methods used for reading instruction in Grade 1 of rural schools. This study is qualitative in nature and examined First Grade teachers' methods used in teaching beginning reading in Setswana using different approaches: the Traditional method, Sentence method, Breakthrough to Setswana Programme and Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach. The researcher collected data from 8 Foundation Phase Schools in Bojanala District of Brits that are under the Department of Education (DOE). The sample was drawn from four Foundations Phase Schools from February to April and June to August 2011; four teachers were observed and interviewed on the teaching of beginning reading. In order to establish how the research was approached, observations, interviews and documents analysis were used as instruments. For purposes of this dissertation, the researcher also analyzed these four schools in detail in order to provide the context that informed reasons for teachers' perspectives. The findings indicated that teachers felt differently about the use of different and same methods in teaching beginning reading. However, teachers did not always utilize their observations to improve teaching. Teachers' beliefs about when to introduce children to the reading of extended texts differed depending on their assumptions on learning to read. Their perspectives were affected by their own knowledge of reading, the programs, methods, and the expectations of circuit and district administrators. Limited resources and space within the programs also affected their teaching of reading. All teachers in the study expressed the need for adequate training and in-service workshops that take into account the context in which they worked.

This study, recommends more collaboration between teachers and local circuit and district administrators when, planning and delivering teaching approaches and workshops. Teachers and local administrators need to keep abreast with new developments in the fields of language and literacy development in order to effectively challenge and critique new approaches. Finally, they should also be supported in doing investigation on teaching and learning in their classrooms.

KEY CONCEPTS: Teaching reading, Foundation Phase, Children, teachers, methods, approaches, beginners, schools, books.

STUDENT NUMBER: 08775656

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, **METHODS USED FOR READING INSTRUCTION AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE BOJANALA DISTRICTS OF NORTH WEST PROVINCE** is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

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SIGNATURE   **DATE**
(MRS MH PHAJANE)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS USED IN THIS STUDY

ACE: Advanced Certificate in Education

BA: Bachelor of Arts Degree

BETD: Basic Education Teacher Diploma

CAPS: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

DBE: Department of Basic Education

DDS: Diploma in Development Studies

DET: Department of Education and Training

DoE: Department of Education

FDE: Further Diploma in Education

FL: Foundations for Learning

LOLT: Language of Learning and Teaching

LTSM: Learner Teacher Support Material

NCS: National Curriculum Statement

NPDE: National Professional Diploma in Education

OBE: Outcomes-Based Education

PEUP: Primary Education Upgrading Project

PTC: Primary Teacher's Certificate

RNCS: Revised National Curriculum Statement

TABLE OF CONTENTS   **PAGE NUMBER**

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS DATA PRESENTATIONS AND ANALYSIS

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

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a foundational skill that all children need if they are to succeed in life. As one of the four language skills in which learners need to be versed in their earliest years in formal schooling it builds the foundation for all formal learning in school (Teale, 2003:114). If learners do not acquire this skill in the Foundation Phase they will struggle to catch on, even with the help of remedial teaching, and will not progress at school. This study draws on the perspectives of First Grade teachers of beginning reading in Setswana. Similarly, reading forms the basis of all language skills, particularly writing, because the ability to write depends on the ability to read, and what is written can only be meaningful if it can be read (Stahl, 2004:57). Therefore, reading and writing are mutually supportive, essential to success in any society and so highly valued and important for both social and economic advancement.

Reading problems are endemic in South Africa, with recent media reports on the high matriculation (matric) failure rate indicating that most learners still cannot read or write and thus bring down the overall matric performance (Department of Basic Education, DBE, 2010:30). There has also been a report of cases in which learners in higher grades continue to battle to read and write, even to write their names (Barone, 2005:47). The frustration shared by many Senior Phase teachers suggests problems at the Foundation Phase, with the inability to read and write identified as one of the major causes of poor academic performance of learners across the country (Johnson, 2006:25).

According to Motshega, the Minister of Education, it is necessary for learners in the Foundation Phase to obtain proper reading skills in order to achieve success in the rest of their school careers, as well as in their later economically active years (*Beeld*, Wednesday 6 March, 2010:2). What research is available (McDonald, 2002:47) indicates that, in general, South African learners' reading skills are poorly developed from primary schools through to tertiary level. Government has only recently become aware that children cannot read, and that

part of the problem applies to the mother tongue and first additional language. It is also apparent that teachers do not have the capacity to teach reading and writing.

The ability to read and write is not a privilege but a right stated in the Constitution (Department of Education, DoE 2002:17). The attempt to promote reading is a task that cannot be tackled by one sector of the community, but rather all stakeholders must be involved. Assessments reveal a high number of learners who cannot read at the appropriate grade or age level, many unable to read at all (National Panel, 2004:80). The researcher is motivated to help teachers promote reading at the appropriate level in the grade for which they are responsible.

In any country, the initial years of school (Foundation Phase) are critical, because that is the time when learning in general, and reading skills and habits in particular, are developed. When children experience success in effectively using these skills they become interested in and excited by reading, which enables them to have a level of literacy and numeracy by the time they start formal schooling (Read Educational Trust, 2005:12). Research has shown that learners who learn how to read and write at an early stage cope well and perform better academically (Early Reading Strategy panel, ERS, 2003:22).

The International Reading Association (IRA, 2005:2) stated that: "every child deserves excellent reading teachers, because teachers make a difference in children's reading achievement and motivation to read." The focus here is on the power of the teacher, not the programme used. Programmes can help or hinder a teacher's instruction, but exemplary teachers know how to tailor the available programmes to the unique strengths and needs of their children. They realise how important each minute of each day is in helping children learn to read and write. They also reflect on their practice and learn from mistakes (Gordon & Browne, 2004:32).

According to Cunning and Allington (2007:59), reading is taught and learnt within a social context, to which the school and teachers are central. This will affect the way learners acquire literacy as well as the consequences of their literacy accomplishments within the learning environment. In Grades R and 1, learners use language to think, communicate, create and express their ideas. This is a very active process and they need to develop their language skills in a range of ways that include spoken and written language, as well as the language of

dance, sport, music, drama, poetry and art (Stahl, 2004:59). Reading therefore comprehends the writer's message, for which some extent of word recognition is necessary for proper reading. In order for sound reading competence to be established in South African schools, it is essential to understand the factors that hinder the development of reading skills and avoid or minimise them where possible, at the same time nurturing those that promote skilled reading literacy (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003:3-21).

The question then arises as to the best way to teach beginning reading. The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000:81) noted that beginning instruction is a topic that has been under scrutiny for some time, but that despite thousands of research studies and scholarly discussions on reading since the turn of the century it has been difficult to state with any degree of confidence that one particular method or approach is better than another. Periodically there has appeared to be consensus on how and when to begin, what to emphasise at the beginning stages of reading instruction, what instructional materials to use, and how to organise classes for instruction. These issues have been debated with intense heat and considerable rancour; but the conclusion that there is no single best method for teaching beginning reading (NRP, 2000:100).

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Teaching is a field filled with uncertainties and it occurs differently for various people in different context and times. Teachers naturally are an important part of the school resources (Marshall, 2002:47), but are faced with the challenge of engaging learners in language learning developing literacy skills and creating conducive environments for learning (Macdonald, 2002:3). Teachers are the ones who deal with learning on a day-to-day basis in particular contexts, so their perspectives on teaching beginning reading are critical. The researcher's main concern was that there were many methods used by different teachers in the area of the research and within the same schools.

Teachers are uncertain about the methods and approach they use to teach beginning reading, but some have developed methods of their own that are far superior to any that have been investigated and commercially published. For instance, they use more than one method to teach reading to beginners, though some were more successful than others, even with

carefully equated classrooms. However, the important element, the perspectives of teachers is missing, in particular the way they engage children in teaching beginning reading and how they help them gain literacy as the first step in the empowerment of the mind.

Different types of children respond differently to different methods, and their progress varies from one project to another and from one teacher to the next, even when a similar method was employed. Teachers have a poor grasp of the methods they use to teach reading to beginners and there is a high level of teacher error in the methods and approaches presented in teaching reading to beginners (Morrow, 2005:3). However, while some teachers create their own methods and achieve excellent results, it cannot be assumed that all do (McDonald, 2007:113-137). Indeed, as we learn more about teaching of beginning reading we find that a poor method in the hands of a good teacher produces better results than a good method in the hands of a poor teacher (Teale & Yotoka, 2000:21). These were not trivial findings, but neither was dramatically in favour of one method over another, leaving the door open for publishers and teachers to continue seeking a better approach than the one currently in use.

The researcher investigated the following in Bojanala District of Education: how some teachers taught beginning reading Setswana to beginners using different methods of approaches within the learning context of four Foundation Phase schools; how they contributed to the successful teaching beginning reading; how their perspectives and the conditions under which they worked impacted their teaching; the relations among their administrators; and the resources they used, e.g., the manuals, teachers' guides, learners' reading books and other reading materials.

An understanding of Foundation Phase teachers' perspectives cannot occur in a vacuum, but rather is related to the larger historical, economical and socio-political context of the Mmakau area. Teachers and learners are struggling with literacy in African languages (Macdonald, 2002:48) but at present little are known about individual Foundation Phase teachers' perspectives and processes of introducing learners to literacy skills in their specific environments. For example, how do they feel or think about the approaches they use to introduce beginning reading? How does the environment support or impact their teaching? What works and does not work well for them and the learners they teach? (National Reading Panel, 2004:89).

In Bojanala District the dominant language spoken locally in Setswana (*Language Gazette no. 23406, vol. 443, May 2002*), with schools only compelled to introduce the language if 35 learners in High School or 40 in primary school indicate a desire to be taught in that specific language. In Bojanala District, Setswana (Home Language) is used to introduce beginning regarding as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT). This study aligned with one of the objectives of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), (DoE 30 July 2001), which states that:

> … when learners enter a school where the language of learning and teaching is an additional language for the learner, teachers and the school should make provision for special assistance and supplementary learning for the additional language, until such time as the learner is able to learn effectively in the Language of Teaching and Learning (LOLT).

Passionate about reading since beginning a teaching career, on reflection it is difficult to remember a time when the researcher could not read, how long it took to grasp the point of reading, or that the basis of reading depended on the ability of parents and teachers. The researcher was a teacher at Bojanala District, situated in the rural heartland of Brits Area of North West Province, where most of the children came from home environments in which parents were illiterate or semi-literate. During 25 years as a Foundation Phase (Grade 1) teacher, the researcher realised that teachers were uncertain as to how to teach reading to Grade 1 learners, many of whom could not read even at Grade 3 level. Nor could the teachers teach reading as stipulated in the home language curriculum policy. The researcher's passion for conducting this study on reading was also promoted by becoming a lecturer of Foundation Phase teachers, entrusted with the responsibility of preparing them for the future.

Another factor that the researcher became aware of was that learners from different cultures and different home languages were often placed in one Setswana class. Throughout their school life they used the Home Language in everyday conversation, both in and out of school. The home language was therefore supported and reinforced informally throughout the day (DoE 2009:6), however, the children could not read. When learners still cannot read after receiving lessons it is necessary to investigate the teaching they are receiving.

1.3.   THE RESEARCH QUESTION

According to McCutchen and Gray (2002:8), "Reading is taught and is learned within a social context, the school and teachers are a central part of this context". To achieve excellence in teaching a teacher must find out what is best for him or her in each particular teaching situation. However, the focus for this investigation is the general Foundation Phase but particular the Grade 1 learners in Bojanala District Schools. The main question that arises is:

How do teachers in Grade 1 classes of the research area teach reading in the home language?

This raises further sub-questions:

* What guides teachers to teach reading?

* What are the teachers' conceptions of learning to read?

* If teachers are using their particular methods, do they help learners to read?

For Flannigan (2006:43), beginning reading is like learning to balance on a bicycle and to ride for short stretches without falling off. Teaching reading is then like pedalling successfully for continuously longer stretches, although the bicycle is still not the main means of getting around and the process is not yet thoroughly automatic.

The majority of teachers rely on published reading programmes and on the manuals that have a built-in method. They complained that they did not understand how to implement the Outcomes-based Education (OBE) curriculum and felt restricted by it, without alternatives. They felt they should be flexible and have a method, even if it served only as a point of departure. Miller (2002:18) found that teachers should be given more freedom in the use of methods and materials, provided they are achieving good results. Methods should be available for them to choose from, based on the needs and effectiveness, but not strictly as a mandate. Room for creativity and alternative development of new approaches and broadening of the existing ones should be encouraged and supported. In order to improve reading in schools, principals and teachers should do what they think works best for children and their communities, even if not stipulated by policy.

Programmes and methods that set rigid rules in teachers' manuals may limit rather than expand their horizons, and hence those of learners. A curriculum that does not provide sufficient guidance or support, coupled with a shortage of skilled teachers, makes reform a long and slow process (McEwan, 2002:21). Schools are not equal in their internal ability to respond to policy changes, and the more compelling it is the more disruptive it is to weak schools. It is not surprising that so much has gone wrong and expressions of outrage and finger-pointing are not helpful (Kun & Stahl, 2003:21).

Consensus must be built regarding the factors that underlie the expertise, differentials and deficiencies of teaching reading in Grade 1. Agreement is required on what might be the key steps to address these, with careful planning in a co-ordinated way and with responsibilities accepted by all stakeholders. It is on the basis of this statement that the aim of the study below is stated.

1.4. THE AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to examine the methods used by Foundation Phase teachers in the teaching of reading Setswana as the Home Language (HL) for the first time to beginners (Grade 1 learners). Following from the research question, the main concern was not to determine how teachers in Bojanala District taught generally but to discover what different methods of teaching beginning reading were used.

The study also examined the perspective of teachers on teaching reading to beginners, their understanding, views, beliefs and perceptions about teaching beginning reading Setswana to Grade 1's. The study set out to explore how teachers worked under the complex organisations called 'schools' and what factors impacted them and their perspectives on teaching. It considered what was known about the relation between method and reading failures, and action that could be taken to reduce the latter.

1.5. EXPLORATION OF THE PROBLEM

In Bojanala District, Setswana is used to introduce beginning reading in African schools. In the early grades, reading, writing, oral composition, (short story telling and narratives),

recitation of rhymes and simple poetry form the major part of the syllabus. Reading lessons focus on sound symbol correspondence during the first year, while comprehension and related skills are relegated to the later part of the year. In the first and second grade reading, Au (2003:35-45) has noted that the most pressing problem was the high incidence of 'parrot reading', attributable to the reading materials and reading methods, such as chorus reading, drilling and repetition. The persistence of reading problems (Au, 2003:35-48) might be explained by the study of and research on teaching learning of African languages having been neglected in the past (*Government Gazette* No 23, Vol. 443, 16 May 2002:1-20). The limited collection of books written in African languages is a common problem in most African countries; hence information is available only to a few educated people (Sukhraj, Mkhize & Govender, 2000:1-3).

The situation in schools in the Bojanala District at present is that teachers are faced with large classes, making the teaching of reading on a basic level very difficult, if not impossible. Lacking a conducive environment, motivation and positive attitude towards reading and writing in the mother tongue, Setswana, is problematic (Macdonald, 2002:1), and according to Marshall (2002:24) more important than class size: "The quality of teaching is more important than class size; a good teacher is good with 30 or even 40 learners, and a bad teacher is bad even with 20 or fewer learners." It is important that teachers receive coaching about classroom practice as they have to learn how to speak to learners, the methods to apply and approach to take.

After surveying the literature on the methods used for teaching beginning reading to school beginners in the Foundation Phase Schools, the following was noted: Teaching reading to school beginners is not difficult but it takes hard work, commitment and dedication on the part of the teacher, the learner and the parent. Once this partnership is established at the beginning of the year, success will follow. Hard work, commitment and dedication are expected of every teacher, but evidence of this is lacking in South Africa's literacy results, with their being among the worst in Africa in recent times (Singh, 2009:72).

This research overview shows a general consensus that reading is vital and that it makes a difference in learners' and adults' general life. It shows that in order to improve reading skills more practice at school and, more importantly, at home is needed. The learner needs to be in

an environment that is conducive to reading and the importance of reading (National Literacy Trust, 2006:27).

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2010:22) has recognised unique challenges facing learners who are learning to read in a home language. Some issues that Foundation Phase teachers need to consider include: differences in sound or symbol relationships; differences in sentence structure; limitation in oral vocabulary; and the need for explicit teaching of phonics. In light of these differences, the DBE (2010:24) states that words and sentences should be taught informally at first; items should be labelled in the classroom; and picture stories with sounds, graded readers and sight vocabulary should be used to help children identify the differences in the sounds (DoE, 2010:10-11). The DoE (2008:8) also produced a detailed teacher's handbook on the teaching of reading in the early grades for Foundation Phase.

Cunningham and Allington, (2007:32-34) found reading methods adopted in the classrooms included the use of charts as flashcards, with the combinations of consonants and vowels that are commonly used to teach the various sound sequences of the African Languages, e.g. **ma-me-mi-mo-mu**. They made the children read words and sentences together in chorus in groups, though not part of the OBE syllabus. Early reading accomplishments included the alphabetical principle, reading sight words, reading words by mapping speech sounds to parts of words, and achieving fluency and comprehension (McCutchen & Gray, 2002:69).
According to Snow (2002:12), adequate initial reading structure requires learners to use reading to obtain meaning from print, to have frequent and intensive opportunities to read, to be exposed to frequent regular spelling-sound relationships, to learn about the nature of the alphabetic writing system, and to understand the structure of spoken words.

1.6. THE SIGNIFICANT OF THE STUDY

In the history of education, few topics have sparked such public debate as the teaching of reading. At the heart of every child's learning, it has been a principal educational focus for more than a century (Johnson, 2001:77). The study will therefore explore ways of helping teachers to strive for the attainment of best practice in teaching reading to beginners. The knowledge this research is likely to bring forth will be significant because teachers play a key

role in the process of teaching reading to beginners. It will also be of significance to policymakers, subject advisors, teachers, principals, parents, circuit managers, and decision-making bodies in shaping the education system in future.

Teachers are key role players, transmitting aspects of curriculum innovation to learners. Close interaction with teachers will give policymakers, curriculum implementers and education officials an idea of the extent to which methods of teaching beginning reading has made its way to beginners. The study will assist in giving expression to teachers' opinions, ideas and recommendations in current debates on the challenges of methods of teaching reading to beginners.

This research will also assist the DBE (2010:26) to put more effort into staff development, learner-teacher support material and timeframes (Teacher's Guide 2003:26). Furthermore, since teachers work within complex contexts at schools, it is important to know their perspectives about teaching reading in Grade 1. For Kamii and Manning (2005:20), quality in education may be compared to running a marathon, i.e., it must set achievable and realistic goals at every level. For this reason it is essential that teachers become partners and collaborators with all parties involved in making decisions that will impact on their work in the classrooms. If teachers are dissatisfied they may put less effort into their work, thus learning will be negatively affected, which is something that schools can least afford.

Teachers bring experience and knowledge to their teaching, but these have strengths and weaknesses. Individually and collectively they could be in better position to confront problems that constrain them if they are aware of their needs and together seek alternative ways to emancipate and empower themselves, making learners the beneficiaries.

In conducting the study, the researcher attempted to understand the reasons and actions of teachers using different methods in teaching beginning reading.

1.7. EXPLANATON OF TERMS

The following terms which came to the fore in the previous discussions were used in further chapters and clarified briefly.

The **Foundation Phase** is the first phase of the General Education and Training Band (Grades R, 1, 2 and 3), and focuses on primary skills, knowledge and values. In so doing it lays the foundation for further learning. There are three Learning Programmes in the Foundation Phase: Literacy, Numeracy and Life kills. Learners in the Foundation Phase (Grade R-3) could accord Notice no. 2432 of 10998 and the DoE Language in Education Policy Act (Act no. 27 of 1997), which ranges between five and 10 years of age. They can be admitted to Grade R the year before they turn six, but grade R is not compulsory.

The **Grade 1 class** is the first class of the Foundation Phase in South Africa, and consists of a teacher and learners who are seven to eight years old. In the case of this study, it includes learners with different cultures and languages, but Setswana in particular as it is their LOLT, means of communication, and mother tongue or home language. Normally, Grade 1 classes are more homogenously constituted. In this Foundation Phase School learners have to be taught basic skills such as the implementation of language, which includes listening, speaking, reading and writing and all numeracy (National Curriculum Statement, 2006:29).

The **child, or learner**, is a person who has not yet reached adulthood or maturity. He or she still has to be educated and learn from an adult or primary educator and is usually in a formal learning situation. A learner may also be an adult in a formal learning situation, where he or she learns from another adult. In this study the learner, or the child, is in formal education, notably Foundation Phase, in a Grade 1 class (NCS, Orientation Guide 2006:13).

According to the DoE, Foundations for Learning Campaign (2008:108), **mother tongue** is the language spoken between mother and child and is therefore the child's first language. It is acquired unconsciously or subconsciously and in most cases the mother tongue is learned fluently, that is the child does not make grammatical errors when speaking in his or her mother tongue. The curriculum is designed in a manner that allows progression from one grade to another, therefore, it is expected that by the time learners reach Grade 3 they will have mastered the basic skills of reading, writing and speaking in the home language, and be able to transfer these skills to an additional language (in the South African case, this additional language is English, Afrikaans or an African language) (*Government Gazette*, 2008:5-12). If used in all contexts, the mother tongue is the ideal language for teaching and learning; it is also the ideal vehicle for expressing oneself. Language is also a tool and if not used may lead the owner to the conclusion that it is not worth keeping or preserving. In other

words, if mother tongues are not part of daily discourse in teaching, learning, work, media, or political discourse, the reason for preserving them may disappear.

Reading is a single aspect or learning outcome in literacy competence which can be described as the construction of meaning for which the learner must attain a necessary level of decoding proficiency (Pressley, 2006:11-27). Reading is an act of communication in which information is transferred from a transmitter to a receiver. More than sounding letters, calling words or responding to a print, reading is the communication through language between an author and a reader (Snow, 2002:5-6).

According to the Teacher's Guide (2003:23), **method** and **approach** refer to the particular sequencing, focusing, and pacing of a given set of stimuli to which the learner responds in certain ways in order to achieve a given objective or set of objectives. Barone (2005:64) defines an approach as "a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning" while method "is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material". Furthermore, a 'technique' is defined as "a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective" in the classroom.

Barone further explains method as being procedural in nature and operating at the practical level. It is at this level where the teacher makes choices about what should be taught and the order in which the material has to be used. Since this level is concerned with the orderly presentation of the language material, a specific method may employ several techniques within a single lesson as it is being presented. Thus, according to Martello (2004:49), an approach is an embodiment of many methods and a method may contain several techniques. Techniques are supposed to be consistent with the method employed and the method should not contradict the approach.

Language and **literacy** are closely linked, the former referring to the ability to read and write for different purposes (RNCS, 2002:79). In the new curriculum, the Literacy Learning Programme is seen as a broad concept that includes various kinds of literacies, of which the DoE (2002:29) lists several, namely: reading and writing; visual literacy (such as the reading and writing of signs, pictures, images); computer literacy; media literacy (the reading of newspapers, magazines, television and film as cultural messages); cultural literacy (understanding the cultural, social and ideological values that shape one's reading of texts);

and critical literacy (the ability to respond critically to the messages in texts). This study focuses on teaching beginning reading methods.

According to the DoE (2002:35), literacy is a term that is generally used to describe the recognition and comprehension of words, but in recent years it has come to connote not only the ability but also the desire to read. Literacy is not just a term that denotes reading, but is about reading, understanding what is read, thinking about and growing from what is read, and being able to relate and contribute to society because reading has enabled one to develop as a person.

By basic definition, **language** means "the way one speaks, and or style". When a learner enters school it is the teacher's role and responsibility to provide, plan and teach an effective reading programme that will enable the learner to become a skilful reader. Every teacher should strive to teach learners to apply reading strategies when they read. Perhaps the crucial point is not that children must know all the letters before they learn to read words, but rather that they should pay attention to the letters. Naming or sounding them helps them pay attention, using the different methods or approaches to beginning reading (Bald, 2007:9).

Curriculum 2005 (C2005), which is the current education policy in South Africa, comprises an Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach to Education. According to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for Grade R-9, (DoE, 2001:4), OBE is developmental, as it encompasses both what learners learn and are able to do at the end of the learning process. It emphasises high expectations of what all learners can achieve, is a learner-centred educational process that shapes the learning process itself through its outcomes, and is an activity-based approach designed to promote problem-solving and critical thinking. C2005 it is also the current educational policy in schools, i.e., the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). It is coupled with **Foundations for Learning** (FL), which was a four-year programme which aimed "to create a national focus to improve the reading, writing and numeracy abilities of all South African children" (DoE, 2008:4). Coupled with this initiative is the new policy on curriculum which incorporates curriculum and assessment.

The new **Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement** (CAPS) is very clear about how reading in Home Language should be taught in the Foundation Phase. The CAPS document differs from previous curriculum documents in that it provides Foundation Phase teachers

with the following: an introduction containing guidelines on how to use the Foundation Phase document approaches to teaching the Home Language; content, concepts and skills to be taught per term; guidelines for time allocation; requirements for the formal assessment tasks and suggestions for informal assessment; and lists of recommended resources per grade (DoE 2010:6).

According to McCutchen and Gray (2002:69), the **Breakthrough to Literacy** method is "child-centred" rather than "teacher-centred". In this approach, children are provided with learning materials (sentence makers, cards, charts and reading books) to facilitate learning in the classroom. The method views all aspects of the language (reading, writing, speaking) and spelling as interdependent. There is a balance between meaning and phonics. There are Molteno readers who are specially designed for Grade 1 beginner readers who are taught reading by using the Breakthrough to Literacy method; therefore, one needs to understand how Grade 1 teachers teach reading.

In the Revised National Curriculum (2002:20) **Traditional Method** has two major features: It introduces written language systematically in small separate pieces, and it relies on basal reading. The core of a basal reading system attempts to cover all the important kinds of reading skills and to develop suitable reading habits and attitude through sequential instruction via exposure to appropriate reading materials. Generally, these graded reading materials have accompanying workbooks and supplementary materials, such as reading books, filmstrips, ditto masters, other teaching aids and teacher's manuals for different grades. This reading is still widely used in teaching beginning reading in the contemporary first Grade classrooms.

According to Stahl, (2004:59), the introduction of the **School Readiness Programme** created changes in teaching beginning reading in schools under the DoE (1997:15). The practice was that children entered school at five or six years of age and were introduced to beginning reading from the start. With the introduction of the programme, teachers are expected to screen children at the beginning of the year and ascertain by means of exploration, observation and evaluation which are less mature or ready for school than others.

The teacher's manual, *Learning Through Play*, a School Readiness Programme supplied by the DoE, allocates periods to reading and writing known as "preparatory reading" and

preparatory writing", also called "incidental reading and incidental writing". During these periods the teacher is expected to provide children with tasks that would enhance reading skills when they finally have to read. The main purpose of reading readiness is to "stimulate the child's need for reading and encourage the desire to read" (McKeown, 2006:36-39).

Early Reading Strategy (2003:22) defines the **Sentence Method** scheme as a continuation of school readiness, as the teacher is supposed to present children with words on flashcards and five sentences in strips to read aloud. Children match identical words on flashcards then copy them into their books. Each week the teacher adds five more short sentences, as described above. In reinforcing the words or sentences that have been taught, the teacher divides children into groups under four leaders, and they then read from flashcards.

For Xu (2003:28), **Learning-to-read** is regarded as the act of introducing beginning readers in the Foundation Phase to the written form of communication, and a process in which they are taught to recognise words by sight, decode unknown words and comprehend what they read. Integrated with the other skills in the learning area of Language, Literacy and Communication, this includes the forming of a perception and understanding of what reading really is. In this study, reading is viewed as a complex act, which includes phonological awareness, decoding, sight word recognition, reading comprehension, the ability to deduce or infer information provided indirectly, meta-cognition and the formation and/or utilisation of schemata.

1.8.   METHODS OF RESEARCH

The research is primarily qualitative, using a case study research as a method of inquiry. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:37), all data and human knowledge must ultimately lead to factual information. In qualitative research the point of departure is the object, namely humankind, within unique and meaningful situations or interactions. An important aspect of this approach is that it is often generated by observation.

1.8.1. Sample

The sample was drawn from a population of eight schools in the Bojanala District. Four Foundation Phase schools in the Circuit were studied and four experienced female teachers in the selected schools.

1.8.2. Data collection

In this section, the original plan for the data collection of the study was described and highlighted. The researcher collected data from the schools, which are not too far apart. Observations and interviews were used to elicit information from teachers. The researcher obtained information about the methods used in different schools from a variety of sources.

1.8.3. Research tools

Observations and interviews were used as tools to collect data. Classroom environments were studied to establish how teachers taught reading. In addition, teachers from each school were interviewed to clarify what was observed and to obtain more information. Focus groups were also used by a way of a semi-structured interview, so as to verify and confirm the information given or supplied by the teachers.

1.9.   DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The researcher's major concern was to examine the methods used by teachers to teach reading in the HL in Grade 1. The study is confined to four schools in the Bojanala District of North West Province. A total of four Grade 1 teachers were selected and the observed teaching of reading was in the HL (Setswana) only.

1.10.   ETHICAL CONSIDERATION FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS

Approval was sought from the Bojanala District Manager and also from the principals of the targeted schools. Letters of consent were sent to the teachers before interviews.

1.11. OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into five chapters:

Chapter 1 provided the orientation to the study. It has informed the reader about the problem, the research question and aim of study, and made reference to the research method used.

Chapter 2 provides a broad review of the teaching of beginning reading in the home language to beginners. It reviews the literature on aspects of reading, methods of teaching beginning reading, and what research has found about the state of teaching beginning reading.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology, designs and procedures selected. It indicates further how the data collected techniques were followed.

Chapter 4 discusses the research findings and analyses the findings generated through the use of the research tools, namely: interviews, focus groups, lesson observations (what happened in the classroom), as well as documents.

Chapter 5 presents the summary of the research and its limitations, draws conclusions and makes recommendations. It is followed by a list of references and the appendices.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a literature review of the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase, the focus of this study being to explore how teachers teach reading to beginners in Home Language (Setswana). It reflects on an overview of what is known about teaching beginning reading in Grade 1, both as it is now and how learning to read has been conceived in the past. An important goal in every Grade 1 classroom is to start children reading. According to Motshega, the Minister of Education (*The Star,* 6 Monday 2010:2), it is necessary for learners in the Foundation Phase to obtain proper reading skills in order to achieve success in the rest of their school careers as well as in their later economically active years.

Various theorists (Allington, 2005:29; Au, 2003:30; Burns, Griffin, Snow, 1999:38; Cunningham, 2006:52; Graves, Juel & Dykstra, 2007:12; Gray & McCutchen, 2006:35; Johnson, 2001:16; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003:3-19; McDonald, 2007:50; Strickland & Morrow, 2006:18, Xu, 2005:27) have determined that research in several fields, including cognitive psychology, medical, linguistics and education, has expanded our understanding and knowledge of how learners learn to read and why some experience difficulty. It is now well established that the sound in spoken language processing is essential for the development of reading skills. To be able to interact socially with others, it is necessary to understand and produce language or listen and speak.

Currently, the emphasis in the teaching of reading is on the holistic construction of meaning by young readers. Teaching isolated skills such as letter names and specific sound-letter relationships, based on a belief that these will accumulate in the deeper skill of reading, is no longer deemed to be a serious educational proposal. However, according to Block & Johnson (2002:76), "no existing method of teaching reading may be condemned", since teaching depends solely on the teacher, she is therefore the one determining the effectiveness of the method used. This also implies that the success and failure of any teaching method depends

on who applies it, how it assists the learners to establish the meaning and understanding of what they read, and how it is being applied.

2.2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING IN SOUTH AFRICA

There is a worldwide concern about the increasing rate of learners exhibiting reading difficulties and therefore a fundamental effort toward improving reading skills has been initiated at both international and national levels, (Lessing & De Witt, 2005:242-257). A number of key educational milestones have been set out in the development of reading in South Africa.

2.2.1. Curriculum 2005 (C2005)

Based on Rose's strategies (2006:10) in a South African context, it must be recognised that the entire process is time-consuming, especially in the initial stages and, as already noted, there are systematic constraints operating at present. Although the RNCS and the NCS are supportive of literacy development in theory, in practice there seems to be very little time to focus on these fundamental skills. It is a reality that many South African learners cannot read independently; therefore reading development and support strategies should be incorporated into all learning areas of the curriculum, to improve the reading levels of all learners. Ultimately, unless explicit literacy is made an urgent priority in schools, at all levels, it is likely that South African learners will continue to leave school with inadequate literacy levels and continue to struggle at tertiary institutions and in the work place.

Since 1994, South Africa experienced many changes in curriculum, immediately after the election when the National Education and Training Forum began a process of syllabus revision and subject rationalisation. The purpose of this process was mainly to lay the foundations for a single national core syllabus. This change was significant as it moved South African schools away from a fragmented, racially defined and ideologically biased curriculum that entrenched inequality.

The DoE has implemented numerous and radical changes over the last eighteen years, as for the first time curriculum decisions were made in a participatory and representative manner, notably "Education for all", regardless of gender, ability language or disability. The *Lifelong*

Learning through a National Curriculum Framework Document (1997:25) was the first major curriculum statement, recognising that schooling is important to learners in equipping them with the necessary knowledge of value in their future lives. Teachers have to rely on one another by learning and applying new skills, methods and strategies, and activities to make reading a success.

The changes were largely informed by principles derived from the White Paper on Education and Training (1995:26); the South African Qualifications Act (No.58 of 1995); and the National Education Policy Act (No.27 of 1997). The White Paper emphasised the need for major changes in Education and Training in South Africa in order to normalise and transform learning, and stressed the need for a shift from a traditional aims and objectives approach to Outcomes Based Education (OBE). The first OBE introduced in the democratic South Africa was known as Curriculum 2005 (C2005), and was introduced into schools in 1998. Curriculum change influences the way educators mediate learning, how principals manage schools, and how learners learn. It also changes the focus of the work of the officials in the Departments of Education at National, Provincial and District levels. It is therefore a systematic change, affecting all elements of the system (National Orientation Programme, 2006:12).

In 2005, the Minister of Education Naledi Pandor, commissioned a Review of C2005, since when the curriculum has been revised, streamlined and strengthened. The version of the curriculum was known as the Revised National Curriculum statement (RNCS), now referred to as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). The brief of the review was the structure and design of the curriculum, teacher orientation, training and development, learning support materials, provincials support to teachers in schools and implementation of timeframes. The Ministerial Review Committee presented its report 25 July 2005, expressing continued support for the principle of OBE and for the curriculum review process.

2.2.2 The need to transform the curriculum

Traditionally, teaching in primary schools has been teacher-centred, with the teacher standing at the front of the classroom and instructing the learners, either by telling them things or asking questions. This type of education has been criticised because it does not give the learners a chance to discover things for themselves, but rather they become passive and bored. Probably the best approach to Setswana teaching is one that balances teacher-centred

and learner-centred approaches. The RNCS policy (2002:6) proclaims that every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.

The Overview Policy Document (2002:44-45) states that, "Reading is a single aspect or learning outcome in literacy competence which can be described as the construction of meaning for which the learner must attain a necessary level of decoding proficiency". Similarly, the literacy learning programme for reading focuses on Learning Outcome 3: Reading and Viewing, and the Critical Outcome, emphasising that the learner is able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts. At the same time, writing and designing texts enhances the ability to read and view texts. Learning Outcome 3 may also be integrated with Learning Outcome 1 and 2 (Listening and Speaking). It will make use of the knowledge gained from Learning Outcome 6 (Language, Structure and Use), RNCS (2003:32-34). The most important task for the Foundation Phase teachers is to ensure that all learners learn to read. According to Cooper, (2006:69), role-play reading (and writing) are the learner's first attempts to show they understand what reading involves, therefore it is the responsibility of the teacher to read to learners.

The DoE (2001:274) stipulated that all learners need to be taught strategies to help them read with understanding, and to unlock the 'code' of the written word. They need to learn how to interpret pictures and other graphics to make sense of visual and multimedia texts, to know how to locate and use information, and to follow the process of reading. Learners should be able to demonstrate the use of reading in the learning process, whilst the classroom should be a rich environment.

The RNCS Orientation Guide for Teachers (2002:10-12) is not explicit on how the teacher has to use it, nor clear on how learners will learn to read or how they are supposed to be taught. There are no clear explanations as to why teachers have to use this approach in beginning reading, or on how the teacher can proceed if the approach does not work. There are no specific policies, teacher manuals or guidelines for the teaching of reading to beginners, only reference to the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards that are not clearly outlined or stated. There has been a tendency to develop more confusing policy and guideline documents to assist teachers to understand issues around teaching reading in

particular. Instead of identifying the original causes of confusion, and correcting or simplifying the initial policy documents, the number of documents that teacher have to work through has increased (Jansen & Christie, 1999:145-146).

This does not mean that the policies need changing; only refining, clarifying and simplifying so as to make the task of teachers simpler and less confusing. The issue of what and how to teach reading to beginners must receive urgent attention. The researcher, as a lecturer, will therefore argue in this study that teachers need be given a set of desirable outcomes and to devise learning programmes that will best assist their learners to achieve these. Schools should be given materials or learning programmes that may be used by teachers who need such guidance as they plan for the year.

Research has shown that children's success in reading depends more on the teachers' commitment to the curriculum than on the type of the programme used. Therefore, the teachers choose the type of the method or approach they believe works best for them (Cooper, 2005:229-251). Some proponents of OBE say that the present education approach does not address the needs of the learners and teachers, but rather places group participation above individual initiative and group-thinking above independent thought.

In New Zealand, where OBE is a highly controversial issue with many opponents in the teaching profession, journalist Jenny Chamberlain points out that it has its roots deep in the postmodernist or constructivist educational theory of the 1960s, shaped by French philosopher Michel Foucault. Constructivism; "is pupil-centred learning; the pupil 'constructs 'his or her own body of knowledge with the teacher as facilitator" Stahl (2004:22). Among the failed examples of the approach are England's Progressive Education and America's Open Classroom, which flowered briefly after the Vietnam War. Sociologists rather than educators seem to drive OBE, which is perhaps why it comes up with phrases such as "developmental appropriate practice" (Wearmouth, 2004:6). Robert Holland, an American who has inspired nationwide opposition to OBE, describes it this way: "It is now appropriate to let children meander from one multi-age cut-and-paste learning centre to another, picking up reading and other basic skills by osmosis while exercising their higher order thinking skills (in International Reading Association, 2002:65)".

In the United States of America (USA) there is a wave of opposition to the new system, led by parents alarmed that their tax dollars are being spent on a system that threatens their children's wellbeing Richek (2002:56). Rose (2006:20-26) and Pretorius, (2002:4) both saw as devastating the effects of a lack of explicit teaching of reading beyond the first year of schooling, especially for learners whose experience confined them to decoding in their mother tongue then being left to their own devices to learn how to read. This lack of explicit teaching may stem from a number of interrelated factors, for instance teachers feeling overwhelmed by the range of demands placed on them by the changing curriculum (Bourne, 2003:498). Although the RNCS and the NCS are supportive of literacy development in theory, in practice there seems to be very little time to focus on these fundamental skills (Graven, 2002:51).

With many South African learners unable to read independently, the present Minister of Education launched the *Foundations for Learning Campaign*, to improve learner performance in reading, writing and numeracy in all the country's schools. This campaign was gazetted on the 14 March 2008 and was part of a four-year plan to improve the literacy levels of all South African learners (*Government Gazette*, 2008:1). It was intended to encourage everybody involved in the education of young learners, namely teachers and parents, to motivate them.

Western Cape Education Department (WCED) learners in early primary school from the reception Grade R-3 are not learning to read, write or count at the required levels, because their teachers do not understand the teaching methods required by the NCS according to Morrow (2005:23-24) and Pretorius (2002:169-196). This claim is based findings contained in a report commissioned by the DoE to evaluate how the NCS was being implemented by teachers in the Foundation Phase of schooling Hough & Horne (2001:31) as well. Researchers found that a high number of teachers in the Foundation Phase were not trained well enough in the new curriculum and were finding it difficult to use its teaching methods in their classes (Sukhraj, Mkhize, Govender, 2000:1-13).

The new curriculum has changed teaching and learning by focussing on the holistic development of the learner. Once learners leave the Foundation Phase they are expected to be equipped with the average reading, writing and counting skills (2008:19). The report from the news paper, (*City Press*, 29 Thursday September 2008:5) stated that in South African

schools, the acquisition of reading, writing and speaking skills is not as clear-cut as it appears on paper, there appear to be many discrepancies confirms fears raised by critics of the new curriculum. The issues focused on how the NCS was being implemented in their schools; the kind of training the teachers had undergone to prepare them for the new curriculum; the support received from senior management; and availability of teaching materials (NRP, 2000:18). Other findings contained in the report included revelations that most of the principals acknowledged that teachers in their schools did not understand the new curriculum and were reverting to the old methods of teaching reading to beginners in primary schools. The above issues were not raised in a vacuum but rather under complex school conditions.

The researcher set out to investigate whether it is because of the complexity of the reading task that many teachers also resort to pre-packaged reading programmes to provide the structure and sequence for their specific class and age group. Many of these programmes are available as business opportunities, although, with the best of intensions, they are not sensitive to specific school cultures, the teachers' instructional styles or the diversity of the learners. Some meet only the minimal needs of young readers, and studies are needed of what kind of questions teachers are already asking of themselves.

2.2.3. Promoting emergent reading

In the past it was generally believed that children should not be taught to read before they came to school, as it was seen to need special instruction that only teachers could provide. However, recent research has shown that many children learn to read by themselves, just by being exposed to books from an early age, listening to stories and seeing people around them reading and writing. Slowly they learn to interpret pictures, recognise words and make connections between the two, a gradual process termed 'emergent reading' (Cooper, 2005:4).

2.2.3.1. *Literacy and language*

'Literacy' is a term generally used to describe the recognition and comprehension of words, but in recent years it has come to connote not only the ability but also the desire to read. Not just a term that denotes reading, literacy is about reading, understanding what one reads, thinking about and growing from what one reads, and being able to relate and contribute to society because reading has enable one to develop as a person (DoE, 2008:23). In South Africa the initiative is intended to inspire excitement and involvement in reading initiatives, to overcome and apparent lack of resources for and in reading. It is necessary to excite

learners' interest in any subject, to ensure they remember what they learn is relevant to their worlds, relate literacy to their world and show them how it will benefit them (Cooper, 2005:229-251). A literate person is defined as someone who has the ability to read and write, and according to Gray and McCutchen (2006:39), literacy is intrinsic to human development and central to lifelong learning. It empowers people to make and negotiate meaning, as well as have access to education and information.

Richek, Caldwell, Jenning and Lerner (2002:308) wrote:

> *"Today, American society is becoming increasingly pluralistic and diverse, as new immigrant groups continue to come to America with their languages, cultures and traditions. As new groups add their strengths and established ones maintain their heritage, America becomes increasingly rich in their cultural resources. Schools are called on to meet the challenges of increasing diversity and to respond vigorously and flexibly to these new challenges, teachers have the responsibility to offer the best instruction they can to all students."*

According to Wearmouth (2004:55), language cannot be separated from society and is the main instrument through which social interaction takes place. A complex set of attitudes is formed which could have an influence on the language in a teaching situation. People form stereotypes about certain language groups that influence the way in which an individual decodes and interprets information about an individual or group. Because many teachers form an attitude to language, they may categorise learners as having language disabilities or difficulties, purely because of their accent or pronunciation.

Learners become demotivated because they feel they are underachieving, which may hamper their overall language development. Many experience difficulties in their literacy development, because they come from diverse backgrounds and cultures. It has been surmised that the homes of poor, working class and/or ethnic minority families are in worse environments for children to acquire literacy than those of culturally dominant, middle-class families. The children of semi-skilled, manual, working class fathers have been found to be twice as likely to be poor readers, because their parents have little history of literacy to support their child's literacy development (Wearmouth, 2004:57). Literacy acquisition and development is greatly influenced by culture.

2.3.   PROGRAMMES FOR THE TEACHING OF READING

A number of programmes have been run for teaching reading, to be discussed in this section.

2.3.1. *Matlhasedi* **Basal reading programme**

In 1988 September, *Via Africa Limited* first published a reader series called **Matlhasedi**, which translates as "the rays of the morning sun" in English (Ntsime, 1988). **Matlhasedi** uses the traditional approach in teaching beginning reading and has two major features: it introduces written language systematically in small separate pieces and it relies on basal reading. The publisher described this series as the first of Setswana readers intended for Lower Primary Schools (Foundation Phase). This reader is still used in teaching beginning reading in the contemporary First Grade classrooms, with an approach for the whole language. Reading is introduced through pictures with captions written below.

The First Grade series *Matlhasedi* presented some kind of pictures which was a text, from Reading Lesson 1 to 19 the sentences had some relationships to the picture, but did not have a connection amongst them; hence there was no coherence in the meanings conveyed. This changed with the last three lessons (20-22). An example of the unconnected text could be seen even in the first lesson, which reads as follows: **ke kala** (it is a branch**), kala ke e** (this is a branch), **e leke** (try it), **le a e leka** (you try it), **ke a e leka** (i try it) (*Matlhasedi*, 1988:1). The sentences making up the passage ranged from two to five words in length and the number of sentences per lesson ranged from five to 13 in the first 19 Lessons. The last three Lessons, which presented extended and coherent texts, were rich in sentence structure variation and meaning.

The reading lessons in *Matlhasedi* introduced one sound at a time, from single consonants to compound consonants as the lessons progressed. For example, the first lessons started with the consonant **k**, followed by lessons that had texts focusing on the following consonants: **l, m, b, d, f, g, h, j, p, r, s, y, kg, mm, ngw, kw, lw, ntw, ph, th, nk, tl, ts, tsh, tlh** ... As can be seen from the way reading lessons in *Matlhasedi* were sequenced, the strategy was to introduce individual consonants and then introduce those that had been learnt in combination in the following lessons. For example, a single consonant **l** as in **leka** (try) was introduced in Reading Lesson 2, then the two letter combinations, **kg** as in **kgomo** (cow) in Reading Lesson 39. Also, three letter combinations were introduced when three individual consonants had already been learnt, such as **ntw** in Reading Lesson 51.

2.3.2. Buisa o Kwale Setswana tota

Mampe (1990) wrote a Setswana reader for First Grade called **Buisa o Kwale Setswana** (*Read and Write Setswana Book*), which was reprinted in 1993, 1994 (twice), 1995, 1998 (twice), 1999, 2002, 2003 and 2007. Buisa o Kwale Setswana is one of the most used series of school readers in Setswana schools, and for the First Grade Mampe explicitly described and suggested how teachers should introduce beginning reading. In this description he captured the essence of the traditional approach, which the researcher will translate from Setswana to English: Before children do the reading in Lesson 1, the teacher begins by teaching them vowels **a, e, i, o, u,** on the chalkboard and on the cards, sings them, writes them on air and outside the classroom on the sand. Continue also by teaching the consonant **m**, point at the consonant **m** and then point at any of the vowels; children should say which letter is being produced, for example, **mo, me, mi, mu, ma**, write again these letters on the chalkboard. Children should also write them on air, on the sand and/or in their books. Combine these letters and form a word, e.g., **ama, ema, oma, mae, moma, mema**. Then, the children can do the reading in Lesson1.

In teaching the writing of consonants it helps to represent them with objects that children know. For example **o** can be represented with a **wheel**; **u** is like a **cup** that is facing upwards and **n** is like a **cup** that is facing downwards. An observant teacher will know how to devise his or her own way of teaching all the letter sounds by representing them with objects that children know. Every time a new consonant is introduced in the book the teacher shows children how to combine them with the vowel, as described above. The words are formed before a new reading lesson continues, with the introduction of every consonant. As children continue reading the book, they form words that will give as spelling, using the letter sound that has been taught (Mampe, 1999:10-34).

2.3.3. Fofelang godimo, Puo ya ga mme and Maru a pula

Similar descriptions of teaching beginning reading and text layout are found in other Setswana readers that have been produced after 1990 and used available as options for schools. The difference in these series only lies in the sounds the author decided to start with and sequence. The sentence structure and content is more or less similar. The First Grade readers include among others; **Fofelang godimo** (fly high), Senne & Sepato (2001), **Setswana tota** (real Setswana) Segone, Molefe & Khoadi (2003), **Puo ya ga mme** (mother language) Morule (1979), **Maru a pula,** (Rain Clouds), Mogolane & Montwedi (1993). In

these readers, the traditional method emphasised that the teacher must teach sounds and letters in isolation which according to (Peregoy & Boyle 2000:28-30) is called phonemic approach, then form words (Allington 2002:83-85) and sentences (National Reading Panel NRP 2000:80-83) and finally read a book. Children recognise the word and then pronounce it when accompanied or not accompanied by pictures.

The strength of the Traditional Method lies in ensuring that the child knows how the words are formed. The assumption is that once the child has learned to form words, she or he can read them in any sentence or text she or he encounters (Teale, & Yokota, 2000:3-21). With the Traditional Method, children seem to be merely recipients and there is little room for them to experiment and construct the learning activity on their own, without the support of the teacher. Within the history of teaching beginning reading in Setswana, the Traditional Method has been used without being challenged until fairly recently (Moustafa, 2000:121-133).

The Traditional Methods in teaching beginning reading were supposed to move in pace with the child, but in essence the teacher was not beside but ahead of the child, and he or she determined the pace and direction with little or no input from the child on this figurative journey of learning to read (Morrow, 2006:83-98). Although the Traditional Method is still widely used in teaching beginning reading in Setswana, it has been found to have some limitations when children begin to learn to read in a second language (Morrow, 2006:23-24).

2.3.4. The Breakthrough to Literacy Programme

The Molteno Project (2002:25), run is under the auspices of the Institution for the Study of English in Africa, at Rhodes University, made extensive evaluation of English teaching in black primary schools, and adopted a Breakthrough to Literacy Programme which had been highly successful in English, in Britain and has been implemented in various schools inside and outside South Africa (Macdonald, 2002:48).

In the late 1990s, in Africa, the Molteno Project adapted this programme into various African languages, as well as into English as a second language. For example, in introducing reading and writing in Setswana, the Breakthrough to Setswana Programme was introduced. Unlike the Traditional Method of teaching beginning reading as outlined by Mampe, the approach used is child-centred rather than teacher-centred, with children being provided with learning

materials (e.g., sentence makers, cards, charts and reading books) to facilitate learning in the classroom. The approach views all aspects of the language (reading, writing, speaking and spelling) as interdependent, so they are all integrated in one lesson rather than being split into separate and unrelated components. The whole sentence structure is considered first, before its parts, with a balance between meanings and phonics (Molteno Project brochure, 2000:13).

Using the Breakthrough Approach, the teacher encourages children to come up with sentences and stories from their own experience and from pictures she or he presents to them. For this reason the teacher works hard to extract the sentence she or he wants from them. To illustrate this point, the Teacher's Manual, for example, stated that the teacher should encourage the children to talk about their homes, or about a picture in the Breakthrough conversation posters (manuals). The aim is to teach a key sentence using some of the following words: these are the **thirteen** words and **seven** prefixes which make up the first set of the vocabulary word and also **seven** isolated morphemes. This is the only set which is taught in stage 1**; mme** (mother), **lesea** (baby), **sekolo** (school), **mogolo** (old), **robala** (sleep), **tsoga** (wake up), **lela** (cry), **batla** (want), **ntate** (father), **ausi** (sister), **opela** (sing), **abuti** (brother), **bona** (see) and also isolated morphemes; **o, le, ka, se, mo, e, a**. The teacher must guide the conversation until one of the children says a sentence containing words from the first set above. This sentence is called a key sentence.

If the teacher wants to teach the word **lesea** (baby) then s/he should ask the children for the news about home. S/he tries to find a child who has a baby brother or sister at home and get the children to talk about babies and their behaviour. S/he shows them the picture of a mother who is carrying a baby on her back, and during the conversation a child might say, **lesea le a lela** (the baby is crying). The teacher should catch or hold this sentence and use it to show that the word spoken can also be written. Language is made up of separate pieces, with words the most important, and in many languages read from left to right (Taylor, Anderson, Au & Raphael 2000:17). The effort made by the teacher to get the predetermined key sentence has elements of controlling what learners have to produce for that particular reading lesson.

Taylor et al.'s (2000:18) review of the Breakthrough Approach revealed that control was inherent in it, running counter to the philosophy that most activities should be child-centred. In this case, the sentence that is being used in preparing this reading lesson raises the questions: whose story or sentence is really being shared and used? Does it really belong to

the child? Was it a contradiction for a teacher using this approach? These questions could generate debatable points. Some could argue that the teacher needs to plan and have a point of entry into the reading lesson. This position raises other concerns, when s/he introduces this lesson, does s/he make it known to children that s/he is not generating a genuine conversation but only looking for her own predetermined sentence from which s/he wants to develop the reading lesson? On the other hand, others may argue that the teacher is using children to provide the scaffolding s/he needs to develop the lesson (Martin & Rose, 2005:251-280).

This position also raises some concern on how the transitions are made from the conversation to the reading lesson. For example, how do other children feel about their contributions when only one contribution, which the teachers have predetermined, is given prominence over others? The teacher's manual for Breaking through to Setswana urged teachers to follow the approach as set out, for instance stating:

> Do not develop your own variation of it without consultation with experienced Breakthrough teachers and supervisors. For the teacher using Breakthrough, this manual should be a constant guide and companion. If the teacher runs into difficulties using Breakthrough in the classroom, contact a teacher or inspector who is recognised as an expert user of the course, Breakthrough to Setswana the Molteno Project (Teacher's Manual, 2002:22).

The use of the Breakthrough Approach in some schools has arguably opened new avenues for some South African teachers to approach beginning reading. Children write their own stories earlier than they used to and read authentic texts earlier than with the Traditional Approach (Macdonald, 2002:48). However, the language in which the approach is phrased still carries some of the controlling overtones of the past. For instance, the language used in the Teacher's Manual tells the teacher to follow the assumptions underlying the Breakthrough, which is a product of extensive research. Before the teacher can do what s/he thinks is appropriate in this particular context, s/he must seek advice and suggestions from the expert. Teachers do need to keep abreast with new and different approaches, research and theories on teaching and subject content if they are to enrich and be effective in their work. However, when they are told exactly what to do in the classroom they may be left with little room to make judgments for themselves.

After the Breakthrough to Literacy Programme was introduced, the Department of Education and Training (DET) approved this approach for implementation in schools. One of the

difficulties in adopting it, however, was that it required substantial financial backing and an adequately functioning local infrastructure. This approach has gained success and has been prescribed in Botswana and several countries, as well as DET schools in South Africa. While the Breakthrough to Literacy programme was slowly infiltrating African classrooms to improve learning and teaching of beginning reading, the DET was also introducing its reforms (Molteno Project Murray, 2006:200).

2.3.5. Primary Education Upgrading Programme (PEUP)

While the Breakthrough to Literacy Programme was slowly being tried in African classrooms, the DET was also introducing other reforms. In the early 1992 it introduced a program aimed at improving primary education, namely the Primary Education Upgrading Programme (PEUP). A programme developed in Bophuthatswana, it attempted to address the issue of children's transition by focussing on the readiness of the primary school for children as well as the children's readiness for the primary school. The Bophuthatswana Education Department's Early Childhood Programme was designed to tackle the problem of repetition and dropping out (defined as a problem of children's transition into school), not by adding a bridging year but by experimenting with upgrading the primary school itself and by developing a pre-primary programme for children of three to six years of age.

The aim of this programme was to provide general hints for the teacher, such as the language taught in school must be the standardised form; and the direct method, with Home Language as medium, must be used throughout. In the teaching of Home Language it is essential that the teacher speak clearly and correctly, and use simple language. This programme had several components of the school programme, including classification and differentiation of children in the programme, structure and period allocation, School Readiness and the scheme of work for teaching a mother tongue language in the First Grade. Although these components are interrelated, they will be discussed separately as they have a direct bearing on the teaching of beginning reading.

2.3.6. Threshold: School Readiness Programme

Upon entering First Grade, not all children are ready to be inducted into a formal, basic reading programme. An effective readiness programme must be conducted for those who are unready. The induction of the threshold was a School Readiness Programme in early 1987, followed by a second in 1995 and third in 1996, and these created changes in teaching

beginning readers in schools under the DET. The traditional practice was that children entered school at five to six years of age and were then introduced to beginning reading from the start. With the introduction of the School Readiness Programme, teachers were expected to screen children at the beginning of the year and ascertain, by means of exploration, observation and evaluation, which children were less mature or ready for school than others (Brand, 2004:32). Teachers would determine if the child was ready or not by checking from a list if he or she could perform certain tasks that involved motor skills, emotions, language and general development, as well as comprehension, attitudes and interests.

This new practice was based on the view that children come to school with different experiences. The School Readiness was therefore aimed at preparing the child for formal learning. In this discussion the researcher will focus on the language development in order to determine how the reading and writing components were taught in preparing children for formal learning (Moore, 2003:12).

2.3.7. Learning through play

In the teacher's manual, Learning Through Play, a School Readiness Programme supplied by the DET, periods allocated to reading and writing were called 'Preparatory Reading and Preparatory Writing' and 'Incidental Reading and Incidental Writing', during which the teacher was expected to provide children with tasks that would enhance reading skills when they finally had to read. The aspects of preparatory reading included visual skills, auditory perception skills, Reading Readiness and incidental reading.

The main purpose of Reading Readiness was to stimulate the child's need for reading and encourage the desire to read. This was done by presenting exercises that developed the child's ability to judge, choose, compare, observe, interpret and think. Such exercises included enlarging vocabulary, eye movement, and facilitating the reading of a story. Incidental Reading was supposed to take place during the year as words were placed on various objects and names of children attached to their desks. Typical examples of the incidental reading lessons involved children identifying their names on the cards, and matching words on the reading instructions in sentences that the teachers had written.

The Manual stresses that there is no formal teaching involved in incidental reading, which meant teachers were not supposed to teach explicitly certain skills or aspects of reading. The

focus of most reading exercises was on developing visual skills using pictures in the workbooks and sentences in directions. The workbooks were supplied by the DET and the exercises in them corresponded to assignments in the Teacher's Manual, which makes it clear that it is imperative that the workbook be used according to instructions in the Manual. The Teacher's Manual therefore plays a vital role in the utilisation of the workbooks used under the supervision and guidance of the teacher and it will supposedly do more than prepare the child for formal learning (*Government Gazette*, 2008:54). Christie and Roskos, (2001:59–89) it is intended to profoundly influence his or her attitude to progress in formal learning when the time comes to progress to that complex process A similar perspective was held for teaching preparatory writing within the School Readiness Programme.

Although the Teacher's Manual states that the ultimate aim of writing is its functional application, namely words, sentences, paragraphs and stories, it describes the aim of preparatory writing as mainly being to help children develop eye-hand co-ordination, fine motor movements and work from left to right. Examples of such exercises include ball games (throwing and catching), drawing, painting, paper cutting and pasting, paper tearing and folding. Martello (2004:271-289) has written that when School Readiness Programmes are implemented for the purpose of teaching academic skills, such as alphabet recognition, telling the time on a clock, arithmetic and reading before children have mastered the underlying concepts on which these skills are based, the results can be frustration and eventual failure.

The assumption is that children should be ready and be mature in all abilities in order to begin formal instruction in reading and writing. For example, it is assumed that during incidental reading children could see words and sentences displayed in the classroom and they will learn them that way. In the Manual there is no attention given to what features of print the child might be paying attention to (Miller, 2002-119). The Teacher's Manual acknowledges that reading is a complex skill but it simplifies complexity when it tells teachers not to teach reading skills formally during School Readiness until the child is ready.

Since there is no hard line between pre-reading and reading skills, it seems unrealistic to wait for the child to be ready before formal instruction begins. While children engage in other readiness activities they may concurrently be offered meaningful reading instructions as appropriate. Readiness for reading is continuous and does not end with the initial School Readiness Programme. As new skills are learned, appropriate diagnosis has to be conducted

by teachers for purpose of teaching. On this point, according to Roskos & Christie (2001:64), the surest way to find out how well they can perform is to teach them and see how well they respond. There is too much evidence of self-fulfilling prophecy in situations in which teachers believe their children are incapable of learning.

Having discussed reading instructions within the School Readiness Programme, the researcher will briefly describe how it was implemented and its implications for reading instruction. Since most African schools did not have pre-schools, the DET introduced the School Readiness Programme in what had traditionally been called First Grade (children entering at five-and-a-half to six years). Some First Grade teachers were given a one-day orientation on how to implement the School Readiness Programme. When they returned from the orientation they were to teach other First Grade teachers in the school what they had learnt. The School Readiness Programme was to be conducted within the first three months of the year and then children would begin formal instruction in all subjects designated for the First Grades.

According to the DET directives, teachers were supposed to have at least one class that would start formal instructions at the beginning of the year. This would consist of children who might be repeating a year, were older in age, or those that teachers had judged as ready for formal learning from the beginning. The rest of the First Grade children would be doing School Readiness, as described above, from January to March. Children would then be redistributed among First Grade teachers. All those children that teachers would have judged to be ready would then begin formal instruction and those who were not ready would be assigned to one teacher to continue with the same School Readiness until they were ready. The class of children who continued the school readiness while the rest of the First Graders were introduced to formal learning were called the "Bridging Period classes".

Only when formal learning began would children be introduced to reading instruction using what is called 'Sentence Method'. This would grow out of the activities that had been in the School Readiness Programme during the first quarter. For example, the circular states; "to continue in the second term with First Grade, the teacher should use the First Grade year syllabus as prescribed. The method for the rest of the First Grade year should, however continue to be learning through activities, in other words, the same method as used for School Readiness". The only change will be that the teacher will add formal work.

The School Readiness Programme as described in the Teacher's Manual may have its strengths and weaknesses, but the researcher will reserve the observations and critique to one aspect that relates to language development in particular, the reading and writing. The idea of delaying in bringing the learners' awareness and focus on the actual aspect of print on the basis of developing Reading Readiness may be limiting.

2.4. TEACHING METHODS AND APPROACHES

Cultivating good readers, according to Pretorius and Machet (2004:33), involves focussing on strategies that teachers can use to teach children to read effectively. The teacher, especially in the lower grades of schooling, must consider the following aspects:

2.4.1. Phonics instruction

Phonics instruction teaches children that there is a relationship between the letters of written language (graphemes) and the individual sounds of spoken language (phonemes). Contrary to the views of some critics i.e. Graves, Juel and Graves (2007:21), according to Rose (2006:27) the goal of phonics instruction is to make children understand that there is a systematic and predictable relationship between written letters and spoken sounds. Knowing these relationships will help children recognise familiar words accurately and automatically, and to decode new ones. A child must learn phonic information to the point of it becoming automatic, thus contributing to his or her ability to read words in isolation and in connected text. However, the phonics instruction is a means to an end, not an end in itself (Rose, 2006:31).

Stahl (2004:35), using language borrowed from Durkin, defines phonics as "any approach in which the teacher does or says something to help children learn how to decode words". There are numerous approaches to teaching phonics, but these can be classified into two broad groups, *analytic and synthetic* (Stahl, 2004:57). The synthetic approaches begin with learning letter sound relationships and blending them to create words **c/a/t** then **cat** (Bald, 2007:18). The synthetic phonics approach has the learner sound out and blend letters to form words, some examples for this being: **s-e-k-o-l-o** then **sekolo**, from parts to the whole.

According to Stahl (2004:57), analytic approaches have children analyse sounds in words, i.e., they start with a word and take it apart, for example, the word **cat** is taught by first reviewing the three sounds **c/a/t**. They then say each sound and blend the three sounds

together. He concluded that one type of approach is not superior to the other. Bald (2007:18) propounded an analytic approach in which the learner has to break words into letter-sound segments (e.g. **sekolo** then **s-e-k-o-l-o**, from parts to whole), and the spelling-based approach in which the learner has to sort words by spelling patterns.

Stahl's (2004:357) study, as well as the findings of the NRP (2000:82), concluded that one type of approach is not superior to the other. Furthermore, the NRP report suggested that phonics instruction is most effective in First Grade. In considering the most effective way to teach phonics, Stahl and Duffy – Hester, (2004:598) propose the following principles for good phonics instruction:

- It should develop phonological awareness
- It should provide a thorough grounding letters
- It should not teach rules or use worksheets
- It should not dominate instruction and does not have to be boring
- It provides sufficient practice in reading words
- It reads to automatic word recognitions
- It is one part of reading.

2.4.2. Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is hearing and understanding the different sounds and patterns of spoken language, and includes the different ways oral language can be broken down into individual parts, for instance, separate sounds and syllables. For some children, hearing these different parts of spoken language can be difficult, because it requires them to attend to the sounds of speech separately from meaning (Ma & Crocker, 2007:53).

Phonics means decoding a word by breaking it down into units (syllables and letters), and phonics instruction teaches children the relationship between the letters of written language and individual sounds of spoken language. Knowing this relationship teaches children to read and write words. For Gray & McCutchen (2006:325), phonemes are the smallest parts of sounds in a spoken word, e.g., in the word **"hat"** the letter **h** represents the sound **huh**, and in phonics there is a link between the sound and the letter. Each sound can be written as a letter or group of letters, e.g., the **"buh"** sound is written as **"b"**.

As children begin to understand how language works they become aware that it is made up of words that are grouped together. After becoming aware of the beginning and ending sounds in words, they can be helped to hear the separate syllables in words. Another way to explore how words are put together is by examining **onset** and **rhyme**. Onset refers to the sounds before the first vowel in a syllable. Rhyme is the rest of the syllable, from the first vowel to the end, for example, in the word **ball, b** is the onset, and **all** is the rhyme.

2.4.3. Vocabulary instruction

If one accepts that comprehension is the goal of reading then vocabulary is the foundation of reading comprehension, referring to the body of words one needs to communicate effectively. This includes knowing the meaning of the words and how to pronounce them correctly. If a learner has a limited understanding of vocabulary he or she will have a limited understanding of the concepts, which in turn will limit the understanding of the content. As beginning readers, children have to make sense out of words they see in print. Educational researchers Raphael, Pardo & Highfield (2002:107) have also found a strong correlation between reading and vocabulary knowledge, meaning learners who have a large vocabulary are usually good readers. Vocabulary can also be learned incidentally during storybook reading or when listening to others. If one reads extensively one is likely to be or become a good reader. Children also need to recognise the shape of words and the letters and syllables that make up the words (Stahl, 2004:63).

2.4.4. Text comprehension

Comprehension is the main reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading then they are not reading. Research has shown that instruction in comprehension can help learners understand and remember what they are reading, and communicate with others about what they have read. Comprehension can be improved by teaching children to use specific concrete strategies or to reason strategically when they encounter barriers to understanding what they read. Comprehensive skills can be achieved through cooperative learning, question and answer sessions, generating questions around a text, and by using pictures, drawing and graphs (Kuhn, 2003:33).

2.4.5. Fluency instruction

Fluency is the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy and proper expression. Fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension, and

can be achieved through repeated oral reading with teachers, peers or parents. Feedback is essential to learners, whether or not their reading is as expected, and they should be encouraged to read silently on their own at school and at home. The more children read the more their reading skills will improve and the more their world view broaden (Morrow, 2005:23-24).

McEwan (2002:89) has explored fluency and its relationship with a good sight word vocabulary, and concludes that it can be improved in various ways but that the key approach should be enlarging the learner's sight word vocabulary. This can be done by creating a language-rich environment and exposing the learners to new words continuously. Learners cannot have a sight words 'overload'. Sight words can be described as words that have been phonetically decoded by the reader but that have been read so frequently that they are now read fluently. Research shows that practice in reading single words leads to increased fluency when those words are later found in connected texts. Many words can be learned through simple flashcard recognition, but presenting those flashcards in a dynamic way will be each teacher's challenge.

Many enjoyable games can be played with flashcards, involving repetition of the word. Isolated word practice will improve the speed and therefore the fluency of reading more than the practice of connected text. McEwan (2002) also argued that connecting an action to a new word will solidify its place in the learner's brain; therefore teachers must actively involve every learner, not just appealing to their brains but also to their bodies. Reading instruction cannot be measured in time spent on reading but finds its value in focused intentional efforts and fluency building programmes in a language-rich environment.

2.4.6. The alphabetic principle

The alphabetic principle is by far the most debated area in beginning reading. These debates have a rich history, with many seminal publications attempting to resolve them (Adams, 1990:81; Chall, 1987:81, as cited in NRP, 2000:81). The heart of the debate has usually centred around which method (e.g., phonics) is best for teaching the alphabet principles, or on the sequence of that teaching (e.g., before formal reading instruction). However, arguably, most would agree that the alphabetic principle is an integral part of beginning reading, that is, the notion of how sounds map onto print is essential in reading. In terms of the reciprocity of

beginning reading, knowledge of the alphabetic principle is necessary to learn to read, yet this knowledge is also strengthened as children begin to read (National Literacy Trust, 2006:4).

Knowledge of the alphabetic principle will enable learners to develop the ability to read words in isolation and in text. The relationship between the alphabetic principle and phonics is that it will enable learners to recognise letters of the alphabet and how they relate to phonics. As children learn their alphabet and begin to read so their phonemic and phonological awareness improves (Hadaway, 2005:11-17).

2.4.7. Making a word

According to Allington (2002:84), the teacher gives all the children the magnetic letters or letter cards, **a, t, p, s,** and **b**. He or she then puts <u>**a**</u> and <u>**t** -</u> together to make <u>**at**</u> and instructs the children to do the same. The teacher then models placing <u>**b**</u> at the beginning of the word <u>**at**</u> to make <u>**bat**</u>. S/he next asks the children to replace the <u>**b**</u> with a <u>**p**</u> to make **pat** and then to reverse the <u>**t**</u> and <u>**p**</u> to make <u>**tap**</u>. The lesson continues with the teacher modelling many words, eventually increasing the number of letters in the words. The children are also provided with opportunities to make their own words.

2.4.8. Blending

According to McCutchen (2002:69) and Snow (2002:5-6), when reading, children need to understand the meaning of the words. Before they can do this, however, they have to be able to work out what the words mean The phonic skill for this is to look at the letters, say the sounds and hear the word, a process known as 'blending' that is saying the sounds in a word and then naming them together to make the word, e g**; c-a-t** is **cat**. It is a technique the child will need to learn and it improves with practice, though some take longer to do this than others. To begin with, one should sound out the word and see if the child can hear it. The sounds must be said quickly to hear the word and it is easier if the first sound is slightly louder, e. g. **b-u-s.**

The International Reading Association (IRA, 2002:24-26) has identified four main methods that can be used to teach learners how to read: the phonics method; the 'look and say' method; the language experience approach; and the context support method. However, there has been much controversy about the best methods to use when teaching reading (IRA, 2002:24-29, with some research identifying only two methods of teaching reading: the whole

language approach ('look say') and phonetics (teaching-reading) (IRA, 2002:24-34). Despite the 'great debate' about the methods employed to teach reading, more researchers are propagating a balanced approach, which is integration of the different approaches (LeCompte, 2003:21; Levy, 2009:21; Reading Method, 2008:9).

The four commonly identified methods are explained briefly in order to differentiate between them. The phonics method is probably the best known and most widely used for teaching reading and writing in Home language (IRA, 2002:41-44). In this method, learners learn the names of letters and the sound they make. Once they learn the letter sounds they blend two or three letters together to make simple words. The 'Look and Say' Method teaches learners to read words as whole units. They are repeatedly told the word name while being shown the printed word. The word is sometimes accompanied by a picture or is used in a meaningful context.

The language experience approach uses learners' words to help them read, and the context support method uses reading material that is in the learners' learning context. Not all children learn to read in the same way, and the electric method is a combination of methods using activities and approaches selected from the different methods and theories (Teacher's Guide, 2003:29). In particular, when teaching reading in Setswana, the dilemma faced by parents and teachers is: "what's the best method?" while Levin (2003:32) experimented with a newer method called 'syllabics', which addresses both consonants sounds and vowels in a way that enables learners to master them both. Clearly, research on reading is an ongoing process and is driven by the experiences of teachers in the field.

2.4.9. Sentence Method

After the first quarter to which only School Readiness was devoted, teachers under the DET were to proceed teaching beginning reading formally, following a Sentence Method scheme of work that they were provided with. This scheme of work states from the onset that during the second quarter teachers use the scheme exactly as it stands; it has been worked out to fit the correct number of periods for each week. Just as aspects of language are laid out week by week so the number of minutes the teacher has to spend on each component is also specified. For example, the scheme emphasises: do not use more half a period per item, as the children's concentration does not last longer. Essentially, the Sentence Method is still a

continuation of what is done during School Readiness, as the teacher is supposed to present children with words on flashcards and five sentences in strips to read aloud.

Children match identical words on the flashcards then copy them into their books. Each week, the teacher has to add five more short sentences that have been taught, and is supposed to divide children into groups under four leaders, who then read from flashcards. The teacher begins to introduce new ones when children can recognise words, and they have to divide sentences into words and segment word into syllables. There are periods allocated for using the class reader, but the scheme is not explicit on how one has to use it, nor how children will read if they are experiencing difficulty in decoding, which they are not supposed to be taught.

However, the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000:81) states that effective reading lessons should be given each day in the languages and all reading in class should be done in groups, with each child reading individually to the group leader. Class readers should be read as available but children should complete at least two reader series during the course of the year. There are no clear explanations for why the teachers have to use this approach in beginning reading nor are there explanations for how the teacher can proceed if this approach does not work (Alloway & Gathercole, 2005:273). The researcher supports the opinion of Alloway & Gathercole (2005:273) that fluent reading involves quick recognition of individual words, oral reading, the understanding of whole phrases and sentences, and reading with expression.

Unlike the Breakthrough to Setswana method, which articulated the theoretical framework and research assumption on which it was based, the Sentence Method scheme did not. Teachers using the sentence method scheme were to take it on faith that children could learn to read by first introducing the sentence and then, later in the year, focus on decoding those sentence. Also in contrast to the Breakthrough Approach, which introduced learners to various aspect of reading simultaneously, the sentence method scheme placed emphasis on separating the times during which different aspects of reading should be covered, starting with word recognition in a sentence and then later decoding. The major difference between the two approaches was that in the sentence method the teacher provided sentences for children to read and copy while in the Breakthrough Approach the children came up with the sentence. Within the same sentence that the children had produced, the teacher made explicit the connection between oral and written words in print. Word recognition decoding and other

aspects of print were also reinforced and simultaneously brought to the children's attention within a particular context.

From here on, children under the Breakthrough Approach took ownership as they could generate their own words and sentences based on the words and sounds they had learned. With the support of materials from a Breakthrough kit, children could form new words and express their own meanings in written stories, which they in turn read. On the other hand, children using the Sentence Method were limited since explicit instructions in different aspects of reading, such as decoding, were withheld until later in the year. Unlike children in the Breakthrough Approach, who could develop independence from relying on the teacher for learning to read, children in the Sentence Method had limited alternatives. The latter depended on sentences to be given by the teacher and had to wait until the third quarter to learn how words were formed to make meaning. In the Sentence Method, children were not encouraged to construct their own meanings or texts, which tended to deprive them of the ownership of the learning process.

2.5.   TEACHER DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHING READING

Different methods can be used to achieve the same outcome (of being a fluent reader), for example, based on years of work of Hawaii's Kameha School, Au (2003:35-45) concluded that beginning reading instruction that works with Hawaiian children has the following characteristics. There is attention to letter and word-level process, but also to higher order literacy competencies, including reading comprehension and the writing process. The researcher is of the opinion that word-level process can be used as reading instruction as it involves learners in memorising words by sight. This is also an approach that is based on the meaning of the whole word and is learned before the letter sounds are introduced. Granted, there have been entire books written on what should happen in whole language First Grades. There are many teachers' manuals available, detailing publishers' visions of what First Grade classrooms, driven by their production, should look like.

Taylor (2000:16-26) states that there is no agreement amongst researchers of which of these methods are most successful. Namibia, New Zealand and South Africa are transforming their

educational systems so that children will no longer be taught but will learn what they want to at their own pace. They will not be tested but assessed, and they will not be failed even if they are, for example, unable to read or calculate properly. Au (2003:29) notes Scotland, is also using OBE, but that it is restricted to vocational and practical needs. Academic excellence is still valued by the Scots, with their children learning the alphabet by rote and their multiplication tables in the traditional way. In the bold new world of OBE no one fails, but is awarded an A or a B for 'projects, portfolios and performances', the three P's as against the three R's of 'reading, writing and arithmetic'.

Raphael (2002:6) observed how in China children are now taught to read using whole-word recognition rather than sounding each letter. These learners recognise a variety of brand names and their accompanying sounds and syllables before the tedium of an often illogical alphabet is forced upon them. The researcher supports the study of Raphael that learners initially start to read meaningful, predictable whole-words and then use these familiar words (e.g., *McDonalds*, Stop, *Kentucky*, and *Coca-Cola*) to begin to learn new words and phrases. According to Goouch & Lambirth (2007:120), test results show that an estimated billion Chinese and other pictogram-based language, learners are mastering reading through whole-word recognition. This study points out how important the early years are in developing a learner's literacy and how difficult it is to predict learner's pre-school language experience.

Goouch & Lambirth (2007:124) stated that languages such as Korean, Hindi, Chinese and Japanese do not use the same alphabetic orthography as in most Western Europeans languages, for instance, Chinese and Japanese use character-based scripts. However, all share one core feature: they can be recorded into sound. Goouch & Lambirth (2007:124) also indicated that phonics methods are not universal across languages. Chinese characters, called *Kanji*, represent whole words; Japanese characters, called *Kana*, represent individual syllables, and in the case of Western languages letters represent *phonemes*, which are the smallest unit of speech. These similarities and differences in languages are important for making decisions about how to teach phonics to beginning readers. Today's world is not about what one knows but how one manages what one knows or can find out.

Anthony, Williams, Francis & McDonald (2007:113-137) have discussed different examples of intensive word practice activities, emphasise that the development of such activities will require a highly creative and resourceful teacher to bring meaning to the words in his or her

individual way. Acquisition of new words can be facilitated in this way and learners will be able to bring meaning to new sight vocabulary and eventually become fluent and confident using those words.

To assist teachers, a range of instructions are outlined and the authors make mention that these should not constitute an entire reading programme but merely enhance and enliven the classroom to promote a positive culture of reading amongst young learners. Activities used by the teachers should have various levels of difficulty and complexity, so as to accommodate the whole range of learners. This can be achieved by adjusting vocabulary, content and grammatical complexity. Reading comprehension development activities should always incorporate oral discussion, writing and small group and large group format, making the other language environment richer and more productive. A successful teacher will remember to extend, create and add to these activities as the needs of the class change and grow (Teale, 2000:3).

According to Flippo (1999:25), children with reading difficulties can usually be identified as having more than one language problem. She describes factors that a teacher should take into consideration that could make learning to read difficult for learners. One of the arguments is that drilling children extensively on isolated letters and sounds using flashcards, the chalkboard or worksheets, makes learning to read difficult. Could it be that one method is more effective for brighter children, another for average children and still another for children of low mental ability? Do children from different socio-economic backgrounds learn better from different methods?

According to Lyon (2000:14), "Reading is not a natural process" but needs to be shown, explained and experienced. It takes time, energy, instruction, support from parents or guardians, and a healthy enriching environment to learn how to read. Learners develop language by listening to their parents and others constantly talking to them. Being asked questions and being required to respond, the learners begin to imitate adults' words and gestures to try to get their message across. There are two overall kinds of language: verbal and non-verbal. Some of the sub-types are vocabulary (oral, print), grammar, and tone of voice, which are connected to reading, others sub-type, spelling and punctuation.

Reading is a two-way process and should be encouraged at home too, because when parents are encouraged to make a point of regularly reading to their children and taking over what they are reading with them, children increase their language skills and do better at school (Christensen, 2006:381). For this reason teachers should encourage parents to read even more than they may be doing. It is perhaps the simplest way to enrich the children's vocabulary and foster the foundation of literacy at the same time (Dickson & Tabors, 2001:381).

According to Lyon (2000:28):

> *"Learning to read is a relatively lengthy process that begins very early in children`s development and substantially before they enter formal schooling. There is a strong and critical relationship between the amount and quality of early language and literacy interactions and experiences and the acquisition of the linguistic skills necessary for reading. Moreover, frequent language and literacy interactions from birth onward serve to aid in the development of oral vocabulary, an awareness of print and literacy concepts, and an understanding of reading. Exposure to oral reading and language play (e.g., rhyming) has been found to serve a foundation role in the development of phonemic awareness."*

Language is acquired by constantly being spoken to, and the support and encouragement of a response. According to Graves (2006:90), people do not realise what reading does for them, but rather just read: "We are immersed in the world of print, walking and driving down the highway, print is never far away" (Graves 2006:91). He adds that what people know but do not notice is that it is everywhere and people use it for everything. It is important for professionals and educators to be able to recognise and be aware of how integrally reading affects people's lives and so it is important that they help learners to do the same.

Burns, Griffin and Snow (1999:81) describe fun approaches to drilling exercises, such as making use of games for word recognition and dramatic interpretation of text for language enhancement. The aim is to stimulate learners in a positive environment by making learning fun, promoting independent work and divergent thinking, or sometimes using the entire class or small group for the activities. The activities that they outline take into account a wide range of achievement levels and practical approaches in the classroom.

According to Baskwill and Whitman (1997:26), learner support should be based on the following eight underlying principles: i) Children learn best in a safe supportive environment

that encourages risk-taking; ii) Children learn best by doing; iii) Children learn best when they can establish their own purposes for learning; iv) Children learn best when they are immersed in a language-rich environment that invites interaction; v) Children learn best when the people learn around them demonstrate a love of learning; vi) Children learn best when they have uninterrupted blocks of time in which to learn; vii) Children's learning is individual; and viii). Each child learns different things at different rates and in different ways, while gradually moving along a learning continuum.

These authors also acknowledge the important influence that word games and fun activities can have on improving sight word vocabulary, giving children the opportunity to play with language and to gain an awareness of how words fall into certain patterns of sounds. They also suggest that making time for these kinds of activities should not take away from the curriculum or schedule that the teacher has, but rather be an extension and use time that is ordinarily wasted. Baskwill and Whitman (1997:30) suggests starting out slowly, and beginning by taking one or two learners for two sessions per week and adding sessions as one goes along. The teacher can also increase the number of learners that participate but not make a session more than 15 minutes, as they will be unproductive and it will take away from the fun the teacher is trying to promote. This will require organisational skills and flexibility from the teacher, as well as commitment, and will have to be an ongoing priority for results to show.

Pressley (2002:10) asks:

> "One of the major findings was that no method was generally superior to others in promoting reading skills, improving attitudes, or creating interests. If there is general agreement concerning the nature of this most desirable reading program (method) why has it not been achieved in America or any other country? If we can agree upon the basic facts, why is there almost constant conflict in the literature of the field about methods, materials and classrooms patterns of organisation?"

2.6.   THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

In different countries, particularly in the USA, some researchers have attempted to conceptualise the perspectives of teachers on curriculum in various classroom contexts. The first group of researchers has produced studies that describe how teachers and their teaching

practices were affected by innovations and curricula that were mandated by educational authorities. The second group of researchers has demonstrated how teachers were enabled or constrained by their personal experience and knowledge of the subject and teaching. In the following discussion, the researcher will present examples of these studies in order to illustrate how teaching is situated in a context that is complex, and teachers have to deal with those complexities while striving to help children learn (U.S. Department of Education, 2000:499).

For example, in the USA, Burns (1999:61) found that teachers who were using basal readers experienced problems in planning instruction. Basal readers were organised in such a way that certain sounds had to be in certain sequence, thus limiting flexibility for the teacher. Instead of freeing teachers, they constrained their choices, but teachers complied with the teachers' manual as best they could. In contrast to viewing teachers as passive agents, others have described them as active agents who are aware of the problems in the system, but manipulate it in order to get the work done. They have been seen as working for survival (Burns, 1999:62). In theory, they conform to the practical situation, hence Carlson referred to their acts as driven by "practical interest."

David Rose's methodology, Learning to Read: Reading to Learn (LRRL) was developed in 1997 in South Australia, in contexts similar to that of South Africa; Rose's (2005:257) LRRL methodology draws on the models by Vygotsky's (1978, 1981) learning as a social process; Martin and Rose (2005:258) argue that we not only recognise written words by processing letter patterns but it is also our experience of the system of meanings that words have that enables us to read. Given this complexity of the reading process, Martin and Rose, (2005:259) argue that the teaching of reading needs to simplify the task and involve learners in working across all three levels in the process of reading a text.

Rose has developed a methodology which aims to support all learners to read text at high levels, with a process that scaffolds learners to reach independent competence through repeated practice using high level tasks, and gradually lessening support as they are able to take more control. These strategies focus learners on the patterns of language and the meanings they express. Rose's six-stage curriculum cycle for the explicit teaching of reading and writing is: Preparing before Reading; Detailed Reading; Preparing before Writing; Joint

Reconstruction; Individual Reconstruction; and Independent Writing (Martin & Rose, 2005:263).

Rose argues this process addresses a problem with the genre approach, where reading is made marginal to the central goal of learning to write for assessment (Martin & Rose, 2004:264). Reading is primary, while writing serves the secondary function of reinforcing and assessing the knowledge acquired through reading. In the first stage of the cycle, preparing before reading, the teacher prepares learners for reading a text by paraphrasing the overall meaning and sequence of a text in common sense terms, then reads the text with the learners following. This allows learner to gain some understanding of a text and how it unfolds, and does not overburden weak readers while they attend to the words as they are read. This is followed by the three-stage detailed reading interaction cycle which is central to Rose's cycle, namely preparing. This stage focuses on the detailed meaning in each sentence by providing adequate support for learners to recognise and identify key wording in the text and highlighted it. The teacher then elaborates on their meaning by defining technical words, explaining new concepts or metaphors and relating them to learners' experiences.

In the preparing before writing stage the learners write on the board the key words they have indentified from the text. The teacher is thus able to focus learners on issues of graphology (word, syllable and onset or rhyme), then supports the class in constructing jointly a new text from the key wordings by pointing out discourse patterns and other key elements. In the joint reconstruction phase the teacher uses the detailed reading interaction cycle again to prepare learners to develop new texts, by drawing attention to notes, suggesting alternative wordings and further discussing the field. This will enable learners to reconstruct the text because of the supported practice in deconstructing and reconstructing meanings they have received at all levels of the text. Such negotiated joint construction is a step towards learners writing their own texts using the same notes (individual reconstruction), a further supportive step towards independent construction in the same genre on another topic. The brief overview of Rose's Scaffold Curriculum Cycle supports learners through all three levels of the reading as described above.

From the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002:22), Park Junie B (2001:80) a First Grade teacher in North America writes:

"There is undoubtedly a need for learners to learn to read to be able to read to learn. As teachers, we can teach our learners the skill of reading, but they only become good readers when they want to read."

He revealed that beginning readers are typically in kindergarten to First Grade, a level characterised by the beginning of the orchestration of many early forms of literacy behaviour. For example, beginning readers have typically developed concepts about print, concept of words, and alphabetic recognition, and have some knowledge of sound symbol relationships and sight words, and some phonological awareness. However, due to their limited knowledge in these areas, reading and writing are laborious tasks. Children are beginning to read and write the simplest text, yet further development of this knowledge is essential to their growth. Teachers and parents need to carefully support and encourage these children as they extend their limited knowledge about literacy.

The reading method used by Junie B (2001:81) at the beginning will be Guided Reading, and can be presented in the following ways:

A Reading Lesson – The teacher has a good deal of preparation for every reading lesson, she must read the lesson herself beforehand, she must know what it is about, she must know the new words in it, new words are clearly printed on the board before the lesson and illustrated by drawing where possible. She collects other pictures, or articles which will help make the lesson more interesting and easily understood. The steps are as follows, each step is important, but step four is the one that matters most. Do not take up too much time with the others.

Step 1: Discussion of the content of the lesson: The discussion should be based on the picture that accompanies the lesson. It is an oral exercise on the material in the reading lesson usually by the direct question and answer. New words are brought in orally at this stage.

Step 2: Drill with new words: This is the most important step. The teacher should ensure that these words have been printed on the chalk board before the beginning of the lesson. They should be drilled thoroughly so that the children recognize them instantly when they occur in the lesson. Where possible words containing the same sounds should be grouped together e.g. **bet, met, jet, pet**. This step can be varied by the use of flash cards and reading charts on which the new words have been printed off on the chalkboard.

Step 3: Individual preparation by the children: The children should now be given a little time to look through the lesson, saying the words quietly to themselves, before they are asked to read aloud.

Step 4: Reading practice by the children must give in each lesson. There may not be enough time to give every child a turn at reading by himself, but good use of group reading, choral reading and class reading as explained earlier will make it possible for every child to get some practice. Only if the children find difficulty in reading fluently and correctly should the teacher resort to pattern reading. The teacher should read slowly and clearly with expression and rhythm, paying particular attention to phrasing and the sound pattern of the whole sentence.

Step 5: Questions by the teacher: Questions are asked to find out whether the words and sentences have been understood. Some revision of the recognition of words (not only the new ones) by various means can be brought into this step. She mentioned that, it is not always necessary to follow the steps in exactly this order; a good teacher will vary her methods to hold the interest of her children. In revision, particularly the lesson could be started with a test of recognition of the words already known using the chalkboard, flashcards, or reading charts. Later phonic drill is introduced to give the children a start in the phonic approach to reading so that they can attempt to read new words by sounding the letters instead of depending entirely on the teacher.

Susan Heape a First Grade teacher of 15years at DuQuoin Elementary School, in Southern Illinois, Diane, Barone, Marla, Shelly Hong as well as Xu, (2005:95) are of Junie's above mentioned opinion of interpreting learning to read into various steps. More recent research (Xu, 2005:59) proclaim that: teach them to read right from the word go; teach learners how to handle books properly; Make sure they touch them with clean hands only; Show them how to hold a book and turn the pages correctly. In the beginning, students make only pictures and scribbles. Later, they write strings of letters, and then they use consonants to represent consonants sounds. As learners 'reading skills develop and improve they can be asked to place the strips in the correct order read each strip, pointing to each word as you read it.

Learners must be able to identify the left-to-right reading direction. At a higher level, they begin using vowels and the words are spelled almost conventionally. Eventually, they correctly spell most words that they write. Integrate phonics teaching into your reading lessons. Most teachers introduce two letters a week. Ask learners to identify these letters in

the words you have printed on the flash cards. In doing these exercises learners will come to understand that letters are combined to make words and words combined to make sentences, capital letter at the beginning and full stop at the end.

2.6.1. Figuring out the words

According to Moore (2003:11), when a child is starting to read, a page of print appears as little more than an array of meaningless squiggles. For reading to happen he or she has to transform that jumble into meaningful words. Most of the teaching time in the primary years is aimed at having children master this aspect of reading. Invariably, the route to success is deemed to rest with sounding out. It is such an accepted method that virtually everyone, from parents to teachers, when confronted with a child who is stumped by a word will encourage him or her by saying "just sound it out". Children's vocabulary increases as they are introduced to new words in meaningful contexts, and then they have an easier time reading them when they encounter them in print. Children practice reading more often when they find it enjoyable and useful, and as they practice they increase their fluency, or the speed at which they recognise words and comprehend the text.

The background to Phonological Awareness is a method of teaching reading that has been developed and tested over a period of time at Woods Loke Primary School, in the USA, by the National Centre for Education Statistics, NCES (2001:499). The First Grader, Sarah Strandmark, studies the word in her illustrated reading book slowly, stringing the letters like pearls on a strand, "smiling as the jumble of letters reveals itself as word." Before 1975, as cited in Cunningham (2005:2), reading was taught at the school using essentially a visual, whole words approach, and most children read well. However, there was always a group of children who had problems remembering words and who could not cope with reading or writing satisfactorily. These children did not pick up letter sounds or relate them to words. It was therefore customary to teach the letter sound first, to see if early letter knowledge would help them. This proved to be much more successful for the children as a whole, and the group who had problems became much smaller.

This reflects the findings of several research studies that knowledge of the letters is the best predictor of success in learning to read. Later (Cunningham, 2005:8), the school introduced some structured blending in addition to the letter sound work. Also, as part of an external research experiment, the pre-reading requisite was that the children should be taught to listen

carefully to the sounds in words, to identify them, and relate them to the letters (phonological awareness). This teaching made it much easier for the children to learn to read and write. The researcher supports the above idea of the ability to recognise separate words and individual phonemes, and to reorder and blend them into other words makes it possible to associate letters with sounds in order to read and build words (e.g., **n-t-a-t-e; ntate**). It is a prerequisite to understand that letters have unique shapes and names, form words, are written in a specific direction on the page and composed of letters and separated by spaces. However, the child needs to integrate early literacy skills to become a successful reader.

They became fluent readers much earlier than before and the group with reading problems was almost non-existent. The *Government Gazette* (2008:1-20) has reported that children learn to read much faster when they know the letter sound, and work out words for themselves. The *Government Gazette* (2008:1-106) also reported that independent writing starts much earlier and accurate spelling develops more quickly. This also reflects the findings of research studies that both blending skills and phonological awareness are strong predictors of reading success.

The key advantages of this system are that it teaches children all the main letter sounds early on, and to relate the sound to the symbols and so understand the alphabetic code used for reading and writing. As a result, the children's achievements are greater not only in reading but also in writing. Because they have a way of writing each letter sound they are able to write what they want, early on, in a way that is readable. According to the *Government Gazette* (2008:120), the system allows whole class teaching with children from a young age, even pre-school, and allows parents to be involved. Goouch & Lambirth (2007:124) write that the higher achievement is reflected across the class, with fewer children needing remedial help.

For Goouch & Lambirth (2007:126), blending skills and phonological awareness helps teachers to instruct the learners on how to relate sounds and letters, how to break words into sounds and how to blend sounds to form words. Therefore, the use of worksheets as activities in phonics may be enjoyable, but such practices do not lend themselves to critical application of phonics during real reading. This is because it concentrates on the visual development of the learner and not the auditory development that is crucial in learning the sounds of words. Worksheets used occasionally can provide independent practice of the phonics patterns.

2.7.   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as Chall (1999:34) writes, not all teachers are the same and thus earlier systems were not as effective as they might have been. Given that teachers bring various experiences and styles to teaching, it should be expected that sometimes there could be irreconcilable differences of opinions. For example, with new ideas and innovations, some will be enthusiasts and easily embrace them, while other will be disgruntled. Those differences should not be shunned, but rather they should be taken with interest, not be readily categorised as resistance to change. Such differences should be seen as an alternative potential for new possibilities which should be pursued and understood without ridicule or reprimand. The pursuit of differences could open new avenues and tributaries for insight and exploration, resulting in new pedagogical possibilities.

Theorists can speculate about why and how teachers make certain decisions, but more effort is needed to help teachers articulate the reasons for themselves. It is in understanding the genesis of such reasons that teachers will emancipate themselves through self-reflection about their teaching practices and contexts in which learning takes place. That could happen when teachers engage in sustained questioning motivated by reason rather casual need. Teale (2000:20) further supports and expands this point when he states:

> *"On the collective occupational level, teachers can build on countervailing ideologies and practices that already exist within teacher unionism and professionalism as forms of work culture and attempt better to link and politicise issues related to teachers' work and the restructuring and direction of public education. Only by critically reflecting on their own roles in the schooling process, theorising about what could be, and working to promote specific changes consistent with a broad vision of a just society, can teachers expand and realise their capacity to challenge the status quo in ways that are transformative rather than merely reformist."*

The rationale was that if the authorities at National Level (curriculum designers) cannot provide a decent curriculum, teachers will create one for them and prepare their own teaching materials collectively, voluntarily and for the good of others and the country (South Africa). Teachers can use a variety of teaching, reading methods and strategies, described in the literature to cater for different learner needs.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1.   INTRODUCTION

In the foregoing literature review the researcher highlighted aspects of literature that were significant to this study. The above studies revealed that while teachers were physically displaying particular actions in different contexts, those actions were a product of calculated reasons and logic. For this reason, it is essential that both the reasons and actions be understood in their contexts. Information gained from it was used as a theoretical basis for the research to investigate the teaching methods and approaches of beginning reading, referenced to the research question posed in this study (see chapter 1:2.4): How do teachers in Grade 1 classes of the research area teach reading in the home language? This research question guided the design of the research and its methodology. The aim of this research is to investigate how teachers teach reading in the home language in Grade 1.

In order to respond to the question and realise the aim of this study, a clear and scientifically accountable description of the research approach and strategies will be given. It describes the research design and methodology adopted, and procedures employed to answer the research question posed under the problem statement. The researcher will explain how the sample was selected, data collecting techniques used, such as interviews, focus groups, observation, data analysis procedures, as well as the limitations of the study. Ethical considerations in the collection of the data as well as the measures needed to promote the trustworthiness, validity and reliability of the research are detailed.

3.2.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed the qualitative approach, defined by Fouche & Delport, (2006:50-55) as an approach in which the procedures are formalised and explicated in a not so strict manner. The point of departure is to study the object, namely humans, within unique and meaningful situations or interactions. According to Mouton (2003:135), the qualitative method operates from underlying assumptions that qualitative researchers are primarily

concerned with process rather than outcomes or product. They are interested in meaning, how people make sense of their lives, experiences and structures of the world. Qualitative research involves fieldwork in which the researcher goes physically to the people, setting, site or institution to observe or record behaviour in its natural setting.

Bogdan & Biklen (2003:194) describe qualitative methodology as procedures that derive data from people's own spoken or written word and observable behaviour. The answer to the problem formulated in chapter 1 on how teachers in a Grade 1 class of the research area teach reading in their home language thus requires a qualitative approach. The researcher used this logical approach or mode of inquiry because it is more "concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants" (Heugh 2005:3).

However, to be a qualitative researcher one has to be very skilled as this type of research is characterised by subjectivity, and develops context-bound generalisations. Mouton (2003:137-150) notes that the research methodology focuses on the process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used by the researcher. Its point of departure is specific tasks, data collection or sampling at hand. It also orders the individual steps in the research process and the most objective procedures to be employed. This method is advantageous because it gives a detailed picture of an individual or group and may form a basis for new ideas and future research.

Taylor (2005:3) argues that the practical nature of the research question justifies a qualitative approach, while Bogdan & Biklen (2003:228-240) support Taylor in writing that a qualitative approach is preferred when research yields results that can improve practice through problem-solving and intervention. Therefore, it gives the researcher an opportunity to interact with the individuals or groups whose experiences the researcher wishes to understand.

In qualitative research, information is often collected by interviews, and those need to be planned and conducted in a way that encourages research subjects to feel they can speak freely (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003:30). Most important in qualitative research is the role that the researcher will assume during field work as he or she actually enters an interactive relationship with the participants.

In support of this, Neuman (2005:60) states that the strength of a qualitative approach is that it allows the researcher to create a deeper and richer picture of what is going on in a particular setting. Qualitative research adopts a common sense view of generalisability, so that the reader is left to make up his or her own mind on how far the evidence collected in a specific study can be used to offer information about the same topic in a similar setting. In this study, the researcher used a qualitative research since this is a social study and qualitative research answers questions from social research.

3.3.   RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is positioned as a case study, which De Vos, Delport; Fouche and Strydom (2006:34) suggest meets the interpretive researcher's purpose of understanding situations that are complex. This study is situated in schools that are complex networks in which staff members interact at various levels. Levin & Rock (2003:43) argue that interpretive social research emphasises the complexity of human beings, and attempts to construct and understand their worlds. Working in this case study implies that the researcher has investigated teachers within their context and attempted to make sense of their interpretation and experience of teaching reading to beginners. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2003:33), the central endeavour in the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subject of human experience.

The qualitative research study (Levin, 2003:50) was employed to understand the personal perceptions and views of teachers' choice of teaching approach. It wanted to look for meaning and not to make generalisations. As the term indicates, the interpretive paradigm focuses on interpreting and understanding human action, Jackson (2003:25) suggested that, this paradigm affords a researcher an opportunity to understand the situation of the phenomenon by being in the shoes of the subjects, in their life world, thereby learning through the process of interacting with the subjects' perceptions, interpretations and meanings which they give to their actions. Jackson (2003:35) also notes that "which paradigm one chooses is largely dependent on what one wants to find out, but also what views of reality one wants to study".

The DoE (2008:75) notes that, like other research concepts, a case study is difficult to define accurately, but for Magolda & Weems (2006:46) it is a generic term for the investigation of

an individual group or phenomenon. It involves gathering data on each individual case from a wide range of sources. This method is advantageous because it gives a detailed picture of an individual or group and may form a basis for new ideas and future research.

According to Magolda & Weems (2006:48) a "case study researcher observes and investigates the characteristics of an individual unit". Meanwhile, Jackson (2003:36) describes a "case study as the study of the particularly and complexity of a single case coming to understand its activity within important circumstances". It should be seen as an integrated system which has boundaries and working parts, or a phenomenon which occurs in a bounded context that can be graphically illustrated as a circle with a heart in the centre (Jackson, 2003:37). In the case of my study, the heart is reading, which is the focus of my study, and the four classrooms are the cases (Jackson, 2003:38). The purpose of the study is to probe deeply into and analyse the phenomenon that is being studied or observed.

There are different types of case study in research, but here the researcher only mentioned the one relevant to this study, namely the instrumental case study, which "helps to refine theory or provides insight into an issue" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2003:78). Here the researcher is focusing on reading, and how it is taught, as well as teachers' beliefs, and has selected particular cases to understand this research question. As De Vos (2006:272) contends, the case study approach is particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time schedule.

3.4. SAMPLING

The process of sampling, as a principle of qualitative data gathering, has been defined in Chapter 1 of the study. In this section the focus falls on how sampling was utilised to maximise the data gathering process. Sampling is a method of selecting some part of a group to represent the total. By a small sample we may judge of the whole piece, (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007:230-240). In research the total group is called the 'population', while that part of the total that is selected is called the 'sample'. Ellenwood (2007:44) defined population as the entire group of persons or set of objects and events the researcher wants to study. It contains all the variables of interest to the researcher.

Roskos & Neuman (2005:20) explained that the sampling procedure must address the research question or hypothesis. Sampling involves the selection of a research site, a case or unit. Jackson (2003:19) defines sampling as "decisions about where to conduct the research and whom to involve, an essential part of the research process", and adds that sampling "usually involves people and settings as well as events and processes". Hence, the researcher decided which people and research site would provide the most relevant information. The researcher put a sampling procedure in place and determined the number of individuals that would be needed to provide data.

The researcher collected information about a number of Foundation Phase schools in Bojanala District in North West Province, which provided an accurate picture of those schools, ideally the researcher needed to examine every school, teacher, principal and learner in the circuit. A research sample of four schools was drawn from eight Foundation Phase schools in the Bojanala District, the rationale behind this choice being that Foundation Phase teachers at these schools were teaching Setswana reading to beginners in Grade 1, using different teaching approaches and methods, and servicing a larger number of Setswana speaking learners. They represented typical schools in which teaching reading is a problem.

There are a number of sampling procedures, including purposive and random. In this research, purposive sampling was found to be convenient for the following reasons: Firstly, the research question was targeting the teachers of the sampled schools as the respondents; secondly, it helps in ensuring that conclusions sufficiently represent the range of variation instead of only the typical members; and thirdly, it helps to establish comparisons to show or highlight the reasons for differences between settings and individuals (Gall et al., 2007:261-270). The process of purposive sampling is not restricted to the selection of participants, but also involves the sampling of the settings, incidents, events, and activities to be included for data collection (Magolda & Weems, 2006:55).

Le Compte (2003:40-43) explained purposive sampling as a sampling procedure whereby the population may or may not be accurately represented. That is, the probability of inclusion is not the same for each element. Kuhn (2003:14) warns that every researcher must also acknowledge that the intended sample might differ from the obtained sample, because of a number of factors. For example, some people might choose not to participate, some might be

inaccessible and others might drop out of the study. Some elements may have no chance of being included in the sample (Le Compte, 2003:43-45). In purposive sampling, the researcher selects a sample that can be judged to be representative of the total population. The judgment is made on the basis of available information or the researcher's knowledge of the study and the population.

Brand (2006:135-140) defines a purposive sample as one selected in a deliberative non-random fashion to achieve certain goal. This is based on the judgment of the researcher regarding the characteristics of a representative sample and chosen on the basis of what the researcher considers as typical units (Brand, 2006:140-145). Magolda & Weems (2006:44) maintain that purposeful sampling strategies employed in a study are identified from prior information and are reported in the study to enhance data quality. The power and logic of purposeful sampling is that a few cases studied in depth yield many insights about the topic (Mouton, 2003:135). In purposeful sampling the selection of participants is a key decision point. Participants are selected to meet particular goals of the researchers, such as ensuring heterogeneity or involving key persons in the research sample. Neuman (2005:219) points out that the key participants will yield maximum information related to specific issues.

For Duncan & Moonan (2007:53-71), purposive sampling has elements of theoretical sampling which look for people who fit the criteria of desirable participants. The criteria depend on the researcher's knowledge of the topic and also on how the theorising on the ground is developing during the research. According to Levin (2003:30), using this approach will enable the researcher to obtain comprehensive in-depth information, whilst for Duncan and Moonan (2007:53-74) it has the following objectives: firstly, it helps in achieving representativeness or typicality of individuals; secondly, it helps in ensuring that conclusions sufficiently represent the range of variation instead of only the typical members; and thirdly, it helps to establish comparisons to show or highlight the reasons for differences between settings and individuals.

The researcher followed Wearmouth (2004:3) in using physical devices such as coins, playing cards and sophisticated devices. The schools selected were all typical schools located in the Bojanala District, from eight Government Primary Schools offering Grade 1 levels. Out of the eight, four were targeted for this study, with a sample of four teachers from the research schools selected. This was achieved by taking eight cards, representing the eight

schools with different teaching reading methods as found in the District where the researcher lived. The researcher spun a ballpoint pen clockwise and whichever name the point of the pen pointed and stopped was selected.

3.5. DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The main purpose of data collection in research is to address the initial propositions of the study concerned (Mouton, 2003:145). An important aspect of this type of approach is that often it is observation that generates the investigation. Although qualitative research is not based on fixed and rigid procedures it nevertheless provides the researcher with a set of strategies with which to organise the research, to collect and to process or to interpret data, (De Vos et al., 2006:356). Strickland (2006:260) states that the research design and data collection techniques are closely related. In this study the data collection methods therefore needed to be in line with qualitative research.

Ellenwood (2007:21) has written that data collection steps involve setting boundaries for the study, collecting information through observation, interviews, documentary data collection such as diaries, photographs, official documents, newspaper articles and visual materials, and establishing the protocol for recording the information. For Gall & Borg (2007:227), and Mouton (2003:133), data collection is a process of capturing facts, information and figures based on the characteristics and the nature of research problem.

According to Denzin (2003:21) the collection steps involve setting the boundaries for the study; collecting information and data; and establishing the protocol for recording information. In this study the boundaries for data collection were influenced by the general research methods and the proposed research question. Findings should assist in making generalisations about the problem at hand, and in the formulation of recommendations that will serve as support material for schools. Data was collected based on the following qualitative research techniques.

3.5.1. Observation

As indicated in Chapter 1, the technique of field observation is fundamental to qualitative research (Mouton, 2003:133), therefore the technique was adopted with the understanding

that the researcher undertook the process from the point of view of a participant rather than a bystander passing judgment on participants (Mouton, 2003:133). According to De Vos (2006:334), observation may take place in a natural setting, and observational methods might be used in cases where subjects are unwilling to co-operate with the researcher or in some cases unable to express themselves verbally. The observer obtained a clear picture of what was going on by observing the subjects in their environment and preparing an observation schedule (DeVos, 2006:335-356).

The researcher therefore needed to answer the following questions: what will I observe? (Am I observing only overt behaviour, or am I drawing inferences from what participants do and say?); How will I record the observations? (Will I make written notes, or use audio and video equipment? should the equipment be openly displayed or concealed?) What should my role be? (Should my presence and the fact that I am making observations as a researcher be made known or be concealed?).

Regarding types of observations, the researcher began by considering the role of the observer as a non-participant in the observations. This was in preparation for the analysis and description processes of data, and then the themes were further arranged into categories and sub- categories to facilitate the analysis and descriptions of data.

The study was conducted in two phases, from February to April and June to August 2011, with the researcher visiting schools over a period of six months to witness how teachers were introducing beginning reading when children entered school and how the approaches teachers used informed their perspectives.

Overall, the researcher observed four teachers, but the numbers of days spent in each teacher's class varied. As described above, the researcher made more than two observations and conducted interviews with one teacher in each school. Here the researcher spent two to three days observing and interviewing the teachers in and outside the classroom, both formally and informally. A day in the classroom allowed the researcher to build a positive relationship with the teachers and gave them an impression that the researcher was interested in learning about their work (as expressed by some). The researcher observed and took detailed field-notes during literacy related lessons, in particular the reading lessons. All the schools had one thing in common: they were African schools introducing beginning reading

in the Setswana language at Bojanala District. The following observation schedule for teachers and learners was observed.

- How does the teacher teach the learners to read?
- How does the teacher introduce sounds, words, and sentences?
- How does the teacher clarify the reading lesson?
- Are the children able to read and understand?
- Is the classroom well resourced?
  - ➢ Do the learners know how to read?
  - ➢ Do the learners follow in their readers when the teacher reads to them?
  - ➢ Can they answer questions about the storybook?
  - ➢ Do the learners understand the story when the teacher reads to them?
  - ➢ Can they play any word game with others?

3.5.2. Non-participant Observation

The researcher here decided to make a non-participant observation study of how the teachers engaged learners in teaching beginning reading. The researcher watched how they helped children gain literacy and also record what teachers and learners did and said during the lesson presentations. According to Kamii & Manning (2005:48-50), the researcher make a tape recording of conversations or field notes from memory. In either case, the group being observed may or may not be aware that they are being observed for research purposes. In non-participant observation the researcher is non-reactive, that is he or she does not participate but observes as an onlooker. The children know that the researcher is present but does not know why. However, the researcher remained as a non-participant, unresponsive and distant from the children's interactions. Non-participant observations represent a more objective approach to data collection.

One of the main advantages of non-participant observations is that the information obtained may be more valid because the children or participants were not aware that they are being observed. The disadvantage of non-participant observation is that the researcher fulfils the role as an observer and is entirely removed from the social interaction he or she is observing (Denzin, 2003:18).

3.5.3. The use of interviews

According to McKeon & Beck (2006:298), an interview is a two-person conversation (dialogue) initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information, and focused by him or her on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation. The interview, though time-consuming, is certainly one of the most important data collection tools as it gives in-depth information and makes provision for follow up questions if the initial question allows McKeon & Beck (2006:299). According to Bourne (2003:19), "interviews allow the interviewer to probe areas of interest as they arise during the interview". Secondly, they help the researcher to establish a confidential relationship, making it the most appropriate method to obtain information from an interviewee.

Pressley (2006:11-27) explained that the ability to interview effectively cannot be taken for granted, but rather the interviewer needs careful preparation and practice to develop sound and recording skills, as well as an ability to analyse and evaluate the data collected (Pressley, 2006:28-30). DeVos (2006:358), Denzin (2003:13) and Brand (2006:148) are of the opinion that an interview is based upon talk and that data could be gathered through the direct oral interaction. The exercise involves the person who asks questions and how he or she phrases them, and, on the other hand, the person who answers the questions. In this case the natural setting was the classroom and the aim to obtain firsthand information about the activities in it.

The purpose of conducting interviews was to gain an understanding of how teachers of school beginners under varying contexts introduce beginning reading and how their perspectives were informed by different approaches. The interview has the strength of being a very direct way of getting research participants' view on a particular issue. It also gives the researcher an opportunity to ask probing questions and observe non-verbal cues, thus providing further insights into the participants' view on the issue being researched.

Four types of interviews are distinguishable, namely the structured interview, semi-structured interview, the unstructured or open-ended interview and focus group interview (DeVos (2003:334-35; Levin & Rock, 2003:20-23). In this study the researcher used semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, which were applicable to this research as a social study answering questions from social research.

For this study, the researcher interviewed four teachers in semi-structured interviews with open-ended question to create opportunities for further probing. Mouton (2003:140) writes that, in semi-structured interview, issues and questions are prepared in advance. The actual wording of the questions is however not pre-specified, but their sequence and actual wording are adapted to respondents in the interview itself. The interviewer who is using the general interview guide approach can probe and expand the subject's responses, unlike in the structured interview (Mouton, 2003:148). According to McMillan & Schumacher (2002:31), the semi-structured interview is a more flexible version of the structured interview, and one which tends to allow the interviewer to probe and expand the responses.

However, despite the advantages attached to this tool, interviews require careful planning of questions, and their personal nature may lead to people saying things to please rather than being truthful. The researcher explored teachers' beliefs to help understand their impact on their teaching. The interview focused on how the sampled teachers taught reading, as well as the approaches they used and their beliefs regarding the teaching of reading.

For Andrew (2006:23), the semi-structured interview is one in which the interviewer has a set of predetermined questions but he or she is free to modify the sequence depending on his or her perception of what seems most appropriate in light of what happens during the conversation. If the setting is carefully chosen, such an interview can yield very detailed and useful information Bogdan & Biklen, (2003:29). At the beginning of the study, the researcher interviewed the Foundation Phase teachers to obtain a picture of what approach or method they were using in the respective schools in teaching beginning reading in Grade 1. This information was helpful in providing a picture of what to expect in class and also priming the researcher to look for negative evidence.

Despite its strengths, the interview has a number of weaknesses. Andrew (2006:100) warns that conducting interviews can be taxing because it entails knowing the appropriate questions to ask, knowing how to control conversations and in some cases being able to handle emotional outbursts. It also requires skill in getting the interviewees to meaningfully discuss their experiences and situations. Another disadvantage is that it can be time-consuming and also requires the interviewer to make a thorough preparation. Furthermore, interviewees tend to give only information which they think the interviewer wants to hear. Cultural differences between the interviewer and the interviewee may give rise to mutual misinterpretation of

non-verbal cues on the part of both. Andrew (2006:105) adds that some interviewees may be too shy or hesitant to provide all information the interviewer is looking for. Interviews were focused on the following questions:

- What method/s do you use to teach beginning reading in mother tongue?
- Why have you chosen to use these methods to teach beginning reading?
- Do you experience problems when you teach reading? If yes, what type of problems do you experience?
- Are your learners able to read?
- What resources do you use?

By choice, three teachers were interviewed in English, and one in Sepedi (her home language). The interview conducted in Setswana was transcribed and translated into English. The researcher used code-switching, meaning the use of the two languages (Setswana and English) for different functions and to avoid code-mixing, that is giving the same information in both languages or mixing different languages in one sentence (Fouche & Delport, 2006:35).

Ellenwood (2007:22) explains that one of the most popular techniques today is group interviewing, better known as 'focus group interviews', also regarded as one of the most suitable methods for this study. The rationale is that instead of interviewing one person at a time one targets a group of people who can provide information on an issue or topic of interest. When conducted correctly, focus groups can be useful and revealing (Ellenwood, 2007:23-24). Because of the dynamics of groups it is likely that the researcher will stir the group to express precisely what one had in mind (especially if discussing something that has great emotional meaning). This might seem beneficial from the researcher's point-of-view but it is clearly dishonest. Groups must be given freedom to express their own opinions and views and each participant must feel free to express his or her idea, even if it is in direct opposition to the group's view point (Ellenwood, 2007:25-30).

The reason for selecting focus group interviewing for this study is that the technique is being increasingly used in qualitative research studies (DeVos, 2006:357). Focus group interviewing is particularly effective in providing information about why people think or feel the way they do. In addition, Neuman & Roskos (2005:20) agree that it provides qualitative

data that elicits insights into the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of participants regarding a specific matter.

Focus groups were used as an interviewing method when interviewing Foundation Phase teachers, in this study with four participants. A powerful means of exposing reality and investigating complex behaviour and motivation, Ellenwood (2007:36) describes them as a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. The participants were selected because they had certain characteristics in common that related to the topic. The group is focused in that it involves some kind of collective activity.

A potential strength of focus groups is that the right group composition will generate free-flowing discussions that contain useful data (Coker, 2006:30). The researcher recorded the interview on audio-tape and transcribed them for clarity and so as to be able to refer to them more readily during analysis. In contrast to the interviews, document collection is a non-interactive strategy for obtaining qualitative data with little or no reciprocity between the researcher and the participant (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:451). The researcher used documents generated by Edward de Bono's mind tool: Plus, Minus, Interesting (PMI), to gather data from for teachers. According to this technique, a table with three columns headed Plus, Minus, and Interesting was drawn up. Within the table the participants were asked to write down positive points, negative points and interesting implications pertaining to the topic.

Borg (2005:227-261) suggests that a useful protocol for conducting interviews would include instructions to the interviewer (opening statements); the key research questions to be asked; probes to follow key questions; space for recording the interviewer's comments; and space in which the researcher records reflective notes. With regards to the PMI document, the protocol for recording information includes the opening statements and the recording of the interviewer's comments and reflective notes. Interview questions in 3.5.3 were used.

3.6.   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Bogdan & Biklen (2003:183-192), before the researcher can gain access to the situation where he or she will collect data it is necessary to seek permission from those who control access. In this case permission was sought and granted by Education Manager, Education Support Service from the Bojanala District to conduct the research at the schools. Each principal was approached with a copy of a letter outlining the focus of the research, informing them of the nature of the research, and assuring anonymity and confidentiality of the questions (American Psychological Association, 2002:57-60) (APA).

Christensen (2006:83) warns that access alone is not all that the researcher needs for successfully interacting with subjects and collecting data. A working relationship based on respect and trust needs to be established before the researcher embarks upon data collection. The present researcher, judging by the attitudes of the teachers, succeeded in establishing respect and trust between her and the teachers within and outside the work situation. Rapport was important for this project because it enabled teachers to become open and frank and state their opinions freely during the interviews (Duncan & Noonan, 2007:1-11). According to Coker (2006:98), subjects may give ill-considered answers if the subject under investigation is not relevant to them or does not interest them. Responses of such subjects may not be possible to interpret accurately and thus the internal validity of the research may be compromised.

The APA (2002:57-60) is of the opinion that researchers have an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the informants. Ethics concern moral principles. As the main focus of this research was on human beings, the researcher deemed it responsible to protect the rights and welfare of those involved (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:459). The following safeguards were therefore employed to protect them. The research objectives were clearly discussed with the participants, namely trust and respect for human rights and dignity or ethics of power; respect for the insider's perspective; the right to participate in own language; the right to decline; and the research findings were to be (will be) made available to the participants. Most educational data-gathering involves at least a small invasion of personal privacy, and therefore "the procedures for gaining access are based on the enduring expectation that permission is needed" (APA, 2002:56).

Similarly, Duncan & Noonan (2007:11-12) contend that the participants should be informed of the nature and purpose of the research, its risks and benefits, and consent to participate without coercion. The researcher ensured voluntary participation and the interviewees were interviewed in the school office at the end of the lesson, the duration of which ranged from twenty to thirty minutes each. All interviews (see Appendices C and D) were transcribed using word processors (verbatim) from audio-tapes. The quotations from the interviews used in this article were translated according to the original transcripts.

The researcher maintained good ethical practice by not interfering with the research participants, especially during interviews, not interrupting them, and treating whatever information was provided with due respect. The researcher maintained their anonymity by using pseudonyms.

3.7. QUALITY CRITERIA

Regarding issues of objectivity and subjectivity, one of the important tenets of the qualitative research design is the involvement of the researcher in the research itself. It is very difficult for the researcher to be involved but remain totally objective as regards personal opinion and influence on the subject being researched (Neuman, 2005:22-23). A critical issue in data verification is ensuring the reliability and validity of the information received. At the onset it must be noted that qualitative researchers do not always agree on how to address the issue of validity and reliability, but they do express some consensus regarding the credibility of the research findings (Neuman, 2005:22-26).

3.7.1. Reliability

In qualitative research reliability can be regarded as a fit between what researcher's record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched, i.e., a degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage (Coker, 2006:88). This is not to strive for uniformity. Two researchers who are studying a single setting may produce very different findings, but both sets might be reliable. Coker (2006:100) adds that in qualitative methodologies reliability includes fidelity to real life, context and situation-specificity, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the

respondents. It was ensured by interviewing all teachers in the same week, at roughly the same time at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year. The interviews were conducted in the mornings, when the teachers were still fresh, energetic and enthusiastic, and the days' happenings would not influence their responses.

Synonyms for reliability include dependability, stability, consistency and generalisability (Dickson & Tarbors, 2001:13-26). For Camilli & Wolfe (2004:60), reliability relates to the consistency of the research, and for the researcher it means that if someone else posted the same questions to the same group of participants they would draw similar conclusions. According to Coker (2006:90), one way of controlling for reliability is to have a highly structured interview, with the same format and sequence of words and questions for each respondent. He also suggests that changes in wording, context and emphasis undermine reliability, because it ceases to be the same question for each respondent. To refer back to any possible discrepancies and ask questions central to the research are two different ways of seeing if the answers are similar. Rephrasing the respondents answer, e.g., *so what you are trying to say is ...?* may be used to determine whether the researcher understood their response correctly, then returning the draft report to the respondents for accuracy checks.

To strengthen the validity of the research study, the researcher interviewed the research participants in the languages of their choice, ensuring that they were free to speak in a language they understood. After interviewing the teachers the researcher transcribed the interviews herself, first in Setswana then into English. After the transcription of the interviews, the researcher sent the transcripts to the teachers for them to read through and check that they were a true reflection of the interview. Again, after each lesson, unclear areas were discussed with the teacher/s concerned.

3.7.2   Validity
The term 'validity' refers to the truth or falsity of propositions generated by research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:200), that is the extent to which people can believe and trust the claims one makes in the research. Validity was obtained by interviewing teachers from different schools who had no interaction with each other. Ascertaining the validity of research results involves issues of truth, determined by checking the findings and critically viewing the data analysis methods to avoid selective perception and biased interpretations (Bender, 2004:12). If various methods and techniques are used for measuring the same variables and

these measuring instruments yield identical results there will be a greater and deeper measure of belief in these instruments. The main advantage of this type of research is that if there were to be only one measuring instrument for the same phenomenon the investigation would be even more reliable and valid (Neuman, 2005:65).

During this action research the data may have had a measure of unreliability due to circumstances the researcher could not control. The respondents may have felt tired or emotionally drained, which could have impacted on their intellectual performance. The day of the week could also negatively influence the learners' capacity to learn as they could be more tired on Fridays, the last day of the school week. The learners could get out of hand as this type of learning is turned into a game and the teacher has to look out for such disruptions. To ensure the validity of the data collected, one of the methods used was triangulation, which involves using more than one source of data collection method (Neuman, 2005:70).

3.8.   CONCLUSION

This chapter has covered the research design of the study, research methodology, sampling procedures, validity and reliability, and how the data was collected and analysed. It also touched on the place and role of the researcher within the context of the research process. Issues of subjectivity and objectivity, particularly during the analysis and description processes, were clarified, as were ethical considerations. In the dissertation, the researcher used fictitious names for all the participants and schools in order to retain anonymity. In chapter 4 and 5 the researcher will describe and analyse the four approaches used by the teachers at School A, B, C, and D to exemplify what the researcher saw and heard in those schools.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS, DATA PRESENTATIONS AND ANALYSIS

4.1.   INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents analyses and discusses the researcher's findings from field work and explains how the teaching of beginning reading in the home language in Grade 1 was conducted. It also provides an interpretation of the data on teachers' beliefs about the teaching beginning reading and the methods they used in Grade 1 classes. The chapter addresses the research question namely: How do teachers in the grade 1 classes of the research area teach beginning reading in the home language? At the same time it indicates whether the aim of the study in investigating how teachers teach home language reading in the Grade1 classrooms was accomplished.

4.2.   BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH SCHOOLS

The four research schools were situated in rural and semi-rural areas and served learners from the areas of Garankua, Mothutlung and Mmakau. Initially they were part of the then Bophuthatswana homeland and had an education system different from that of South Africa. They used the Primary Education Upgrading Project (PEUP), comprising Breakthrough to Literacy (Setswana) Programmes, as approaches to teaching reading. Breakthrough to Setswana is a method of teaching reading and writing to children. It is different from other methods because it is based on the child's own experience. Prior to learning to read and to write children were given as much opportunity to talk about their experiences as possible. Every opportunity that presents itself for real experiences should be used and teachers should encourage children to relate their experiences to a friend, to a group of children and the teacher and the class. The aim of the PEUP is to develop learners, with a kind of independence of thought that will not succumb to intimidation. It stresses group work and sharing of personal decisions.

With the introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) being the new approach of teaching reading to them, teachers were expected to apply appropriate and relevant knowledge and skills required by the new curriculum in the new education system.

4.3.   RESEARCH FINDINGS

Before the research questions were asked, an overview of teachers' names, professional qualifications, gender, teaching experience, age and their home language were discussed. Their details are covered in the following table:

TABLE 4.1: Qualifications, profile and demographics of the participants

School	Teacher's name	Professional qualification	Gender	Teaching Experience	Age	Home language
A	T1	Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD), Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE).	Female	30	52	Setswana
B	T2	Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC), Further Diploma in Education (FDE).	Female	27	50	Northern Sotho
C	T3	National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE), Advanced Certificate in Education (Inclusive Education) (ACE).	Female	23	47	Setswana
D	T4	Diploma in Development Studies (DDS), Bachelor of Arts General Degree (BA).	Female	18	45	Setswana

4.3.1 Teachers' demographics

Professional Qualifications

Teacher 1 was professionally qualified, with a Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) and an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), suggesting she might be good at teaching reading. Teacher 2 had professional qualifications in the forms of a Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC), Further Diploma in Education (FDE). However, the PTC may be outdated, and she might lack content knowledge about language teaching since she trained when entrance requirements were only Grade 8 (Form 3 at the time). This could impact negatively on her teaching and learning of reading in home language and that could see her tied to old methods that might not produce good results. However, she had upgraded and obtained the more up-to-date FDE.

Teacher 3's teaching qualifications were a National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE), and Advanced Certificate in Education (Inclusive Education) (ACE). Teacher 4 was also professionally qualified, with a Diploma in Development Studies (DDS), as well as Bachelor of Arts General Degree (BA). She might have been expected to experience teaching problems as her qualifications lacked training in professional teaching methods.

All the teachers had recognised teaching qualifications, in their teaching diplomas, which qualified them as professionals. They were all supposedly competent to teach Grade 1 level. Given such qualifications they (teachers) were expected to overcome barriers to teaching reading.

Gender

All teachers were female and, as is usual at primary schools, were called **(mme)** 'mothers', and had some knowledge of dealing with young learners since they were parents themselves. Female teachers are (initially) known to be passionate, motherly, and considerate towards learners in general, and learners feel safe around them. Such a learning environment could be more relaxed and conducive to learning. These female teachers were all responsible for Grade 1, and had supposedly also been taught how to teach reading in the Home Language (HL). However, the observed poor reading skills would not confirm this. The question arises as to whether children's poor Setswana reading skills can be blamed on the teachers' qualifications or other reasons, it can also be possible that the training the teachers received was poor and the certificates obtained (such as ACE, NPDE, DBE, DDS) badly conceived.

Age

Teacher 1 was a 52 year-old Grade 1 teacher at School A. Teacher 2 was a Grade 1 teacher of 50 years of age, at School B. Teacher 3was a 47 years old teacher and had been employed in a Grade 1 at School C. Lastly, Teacher 4 was also one of the Grade1 teachers at School D and was 45 years of age. Their ages thus ranged from 45 to 52 years of age.

Teaching experience

In general, all the teachers were mature in age, their teaching experiences ranging from 18, 23, 27, to 30 years. Teacher 1, with the necessary qualifications and 30 years experience of teaching seemed to be the longest in service, with a good track record. Teacher 2 had confidence, dedication and also a good teacher. Teacher 3 was more knowledgeable and experienced with children's problem identification. Although Teacher 4 had the least in teaching experience of all, 18 years still represented a good deal and indicated she was not a beginner. They all had a good reputation for teaching Grade 1's at their respective schools, and none could be regarded as inactive or unproductive. All were very good, interested in their work and productive, and could be trusted with teaching reading to learners effectively.

Teacher's Home Language

The Home Language of children in the research is Setswana, and Teachers 1, 3 and 4 were Setswana home speakers, Teacher 2 being a Northern Sotho speaker (Sepedi). This did not create a problem because Northern Sotho is close to Setswana, in which she was fluent. Again, every language uses reading methods to teach reading to beginners.

4.3.2. Classroom factors impacting teaching reading

Below are the detailed descriptive narratives from the research observations (par.3.5.1). They are described according to the participating school and teacher, and focused on five factors, namely: methods used in the teaching of reading of children; teacher learner interaction; lesson activities or methods; the classroom size, (overcrowding); and learning environment (availability of resources).

4.3.2.1.   *Methods used in the teaching of reading of children*

They were uncertain about this approach as it had no clear explanations about how teachers had to use it in the beginning of teaching reading, nor were there explanations for how the

teachers could proceed if this approach did not work. They developed methods of their own, and used more than one to teach reading to beginners.

The teacher at School A had a Molteno kit (materials and equipment) in her class, consisting of the teacher's sentence maker and word cards, the teacher's sentence holder, the learner's sentence maker and word cards, the learner's sentence holder, the learner' storybook, the word store, the conversation posters, the phonic frieze posters and the Breakthrough Molteno readers. The programme she used would be regarded as the Breakthrough to Literacy, which prioritises what the learners brings with them to school from home, and is a mother tongue literacy course (The Molteno Project, 2003:2).

The advantage of using this programme was that it is a learner-centred method that uses the learner's firsthand experiences and natural interests as motivating forces in helping them to acquire reading skills, (Molteno Project 2003:28). Breakthrough to Literacy has several unique features, for example, the teacher taught reading to a group of learners from a poster in the teaching corner, while the other groups were given tasks to occupy them. In the teaching corner the teacher teaches the learners the key sentence for the day from a chart or poster.

Having talked about the sentence, shown it to the children on the board and on flashcards, she constructed the sentence she had written on the board from individual letters on flashcards by sticking them on the sentence maker. After the demonstration and the learners had mastered it, the teacher gave them each sentence makers and started by identifying the words that built the sentence they had covered with the teacher in the teaching corner.

The teacher liked this idea, "*in the Breakthrough Programme, the learner does not only read the word on the board but he or she is able to touch the word on the flashcard. The learner can turn it sideways, upside down and anyhow at any time because he or she has access to it, everyday at anytime. The learner is able to construct and remove the word as he or she wishes, she creates the one she or he likes. In this approach, the learner thinks for himself. The teacher simply gives them a word and asks them to write a sentence. They all come up with different sentences. In this approach, control goes to the learner. You as a teacher you are only there as a guide*".

The first teacher felt that learners would need to have School Readiness before she could begin introducing the Breakthrough Approach. She said that the reason for this was that the learners would not know how to write when they first entered school: *So the Schools Readiness is a must! You can't manage if learners have not done it. Even if things could go well, these learners would not be the same as those who would have attended School Readiness. The hands of the learners who attended School Readiness would have been used to writing by the time you get to them into formal work. She added that School Readiness was essential because on the first day she began introducing formal work in beginning reading.*

The second teacher used similar descriptions of teaching beginning reading and text layout found in Setswana readers. When formal learning began learners would be introduced to reading instructions using the Sentence Method (Fofelang Godimo, reader of Senne & Sepato, 2001; Setswana Tota, also a reader by Segone, Molefe & Khoadi, 2003; as readers produced after 1990 and available as options for First Grades). The Sentence Method would grow out of the activities in the story lesson. Teacher 2 used it to take it on faith that learners could learn to read by first introducing the sentence and then, later in the year, focus on decoding those sentences (Miller, 2002:117).

According to Teale (2003:117), the Traditional Method emphasised phonemic awareness, phonics and alphabetic knowledge. It is an approach to teach beginning reading development in the sense that it considers the learner's emergent literacy and gives attention to phonics. The above description presented Teacher 3's reflections of teaching beginning reading using the Traditional Method by first using giant pictures, then flashcards, then sentence strips and then finishing by using of the book. This was how they introduced reading in the first year. Teacher 3's description of introducing beginning reading started with parts and moved to the whole.

These descriptions were also similar to the Traditional Method described by Ntsime (1988) in the reader series *Matlhasedi* (The rays of the morning sun), and Buisa o kwale Setswana (Read and Write Setswana) by Mampe (reprinted 2007), both series for the First Grade. In these readers, the Traditional Method emphasised that the teacher must teach sounds and letters in isolation, then form words and sentences, and finally read a book. Teacher 3 recognised the goal of Traditional Method and the importance of involving learners in reading, but at the same time those goals did not have an impact on her way of viewing or supporting literacy development in her Grade 1 classroom.

According to Au (2003:44), different methods can be used to achieve the same outcome; Teacher 4 used the combined approach to present her lesson, which not only focuses on one approach to the teaching of reading. She used a combination of methods in order to make the mastery of the reading skill easier for the learners, namely the Traditional Method, the methods of the Breakthrough Programme to Literacy which is word approach to reading, as well as the Sentence Method in one reading lesson. As the new curriculum (OBE) evolved, The DoE (2001:274) realised the need for greater emphasis on basic skills being taught to learners, especially in the formative years. The curriculum has revolutionised teaching and learning by centring the teacher's focus on the holistic development of the learner. Once learners leave the Foundation Phase they are expected to be equipped with the average reading, writing and counting skills.

In all the schools observed, classrooms were arranged in groups; however, only learners in School D, due to overcrowding, were still seated in rows or church style, facing one direction. All the teachers were still using whole class teaching (standing in front of the classroom) as the only method of teaching reading to beginners. However, Teacher 4 also used different teaching methods (combined or mixed methods). From what the researcher observed, the way the teachers arranged their classroom did not mean learners work cooperatively together. For them to be active agents, as in line with Au (2003:48) and the DoE (2001:284), all learners need to be taught strategies to help them read with understanding, and to help them unlock the code of the read words. Teachers could thus consider including different approaches when teaching beginning reading to beginners.

4.3.2.2.   *Teacher learner interactions*

Teacher 1, in the reading lesson the researcher observed, taught reading to a group of learners from a conversation poster as a story to the whole class. The teacher discussed with the learners what they thought was happening in the picture and involved their prior knowledge and experiences. The main aim was to get a key sentence from them, using some of the following key words from the Teachers' Manual: these are the **thirteen words** (**mme** (mother), **lesea** (baby), **sekolo** (school), **mogolo** (elderly), **robala** (to sleep), **tsoga** (to wake up), **lela** (to cry), **batla** (to want), **ntate** (father), **ausi** (sister), **opela** (to sing), **abuti** (brother), **bona** (to see), and also **seven** isolated morphemes (outside prefixes) ; **o, le, ka, se, mo, e, a.** These were the only set taught in **stage 1**.

Once the key sentence had been identified or given, for example: **lesea le a lela** (the baby is crying), Teacher 1 asked all the learners to repeat it. In the process they were identifying different words that made up the sentence. For instance, in the sentence **"ntate o bona mme"** (father sees mother), Teacher 1 used her finger to distinguish words such as **"ntate"** (one), **"o"** (two), **"bona"** (three), and **mme** (four). She then asked, "do you see spaces in between words?" (as represented by her fingers in the demonstration), stressing that from the beginning (spacing). Learners learn about the different sentence parts before they could even write it down. She maintained that from the beginning the idea was instilled in the learners' heads that words are written separately, just as they come out of the mouth in speech.

Teacher 2 at School B began her lesson presentation by telling a story, with all learners sitting on a mat. She did not read them the story directly from the book or even model reading for them. The teacher then started off by asking them to say the title of the story out loud, and then talked about the pictures in the book by describing the content of the pictures. The teacher then read aloud the first page and asked questions such as; **"what is this?"**, **"what is the meaning of this word?"**, **"what is the duck doing?"** after which the learners repeated the first page aloud to the rest of the class. If anyone could not pronounce the words in the sentence she helped them. The teacher also asked questions about the progress of the story, their prior knowledge on the subject of the book, using the pictures as clues, for example **"what's going to happen next?"** and about the learner's existing knowledge about events in the story. They continued in this manner until the last page.

The teacher indicated the topic for the lesson and explained new words to the learners by using flashcards and the chalkboard. Examples of these new words were: "**pidibidi"** (duck), **"sesa"** (swim). The teacher explained the meaning of the words and pronounced them for the class. She then let the class as a group repeat the words aloud, and ask them one by one to read back the words to her aloud. If the learners had difficulty with the pronunciation she corrected them.

The third teacher at School C started her reading lesson with a story derived from a picture with domestic animals, and asked them probing and leading questions that would explain the story. She introduced vowels by asking them to imitate how a donkey brays. Learners then said **o! o! o! o!,** she then wrote **"o"** on the chalkboard and also asked learners to write **"o"** in

the air with their fingers. She used a similar approach when introducing other vowels (**a, e, i, o, u.**) and the consonants.

Teacher 3 gave all learners the magnetic letters or letter cards **[a] (r, n. m, w, s, š, l, h, b, d, k, f, t, j, y, g, and p).** She then put **r** and **a** together to make **r-a,** and instructed the learners to do the same. The teacher then modelled placing **ma** at the end of the word **ra** to make **ra-ma.** She next replaced the **ra** with **wa** to make it **ra-wa**, the lesson continued with the teacher modelling many words and eventually increasing the number of letters in the words, e.g., **ra-ta** (like), **ra-ga** (kick), **re a-ja** (we are eating), **na-ma** (meat), **ša-pa** (swim), that is alliteration, words that begin with the same sound,(**rata, raga, raja, ra-ma, ra-wa**). The learners were also provided opportunities to make their own words. In this lesson, the learners were actively engaged in making words. They were asked both to figure out what words they made as they changed letters, and to change letters on their own to make new words (conservative Setswana words), e.g., **[e] (r, n. m, w, s, š, l, h, b, d, k, f, t, j, y, g, and p), be-ke** (week), **he-le** (hell), **se-le-pe** (axe) etc, **[i] hi-li,** (heel), **ki-wi,** (kiwi), **si-li-ng** (ceiling) etc, **[o] ro-ko** (dress), **mo-ro** (soup), **no-mo-ro** (number), etc **[u] ku-ku** (cake), **fu-ru** (fur), **fu-lu-tu** (flute). In line with the National Literacy Trust (2006:31-35), the teacher used also the phonics method.

She introduced the vowels in such a way that they could stand independently and convey meaning such as idiophones. When she introduced how the vowels and consonants were put together to make meaningful sound she was careful to form the words which were naturally monosyllabic, such as those who conveyed idiophones and vocatives such as **mme** (mother). In the above excerpt, Teacher 3 introduced beginning reading by sequencing vowels and consonants in a step-by-step format. After forming syllables, she formed words, and then sentences. When learners had been introduced to a variety of consonants and could form several words, they were introduced to book reading. Before they could read actual texts, teachers had to make sentence strips derived from the class reader and had learners read those first (e.g., *Matlhasedi* page 3 Thuto 3, **b, ba, bala, be, bela, e a bela, ba a leba, ba e leba e bela, ba bala buka).**

According to Burns (1999:17), where two or more Grades are put together in one classroom because there are too many students and too little space, it is called a 'multi-grade class'. According to Miller there are two or more grades put together in one class, but each grade

still has its own curriculum. In the beginning, the teacher at School D combined Grades 1 and 2 sit on the floor facing the board and explored aspects of the same theme, i.e., conducted a lesson on reading with both groups. There was no reason to separate learners at this stage for reading, as they all should have been able to read the same text. She introduced reading by narrating a story about a monkey which was tied by a rope to a tree, after which the teacher started with the basics. Firstly, the learners were supposed to recognise and read all the letters of the alphabet, and they should also be able to know the sounds associated with each other.

The learners were introduced to the formation of each letter in the following ways: the teacher showed the formation on the chalkboard, then in the air, taking care when facing the learners that the letter was formed in the correct way around for them. The learners watched and then imitated, saying the sound. They did this several times. The teacher built vocabulary by writing a few words on the chalkboard each day that may occur in stories and referred to them several times a day so that learners became familiar with the spelling and the sound.

Reinforcement of the letter sound was very important. It was vital that the learners knew the letter sounds, as they needed to be fluent in saying the sound immediately after having seen the letters. However, learning the letter sound is not enough. The learners needed to know how to apply their letter knowledge. From the beginning they were taught to blend the sounds and hear the words for reading, as well as learning that the words they spoke could also be written. Language is made up of separate pieces and words are the most important of these.

The teacher explained the class or lesson activity to the children as follows: she wrote the words from the list on the chalkboard, called a learner to the front of the class and asked him or her to find and identify a specific word. When the learner had found the word the class read it aloud together and wrote it in the air with their fingers. The teacher then divided the class into groups, Grade 1 and Grade 2. The Grade 1 challenged the Grade 2 to write a specific word from the wordlist on the chalkboard. If a learner from Grade 2 spelled the word correctly by him/herself then the group won three points. If the learner had to seek help from the rest of the Grade, then it received only two points. If nobody in the group knew how to spell the word, then Grade 1 received a bonus point. Grade 2 would then ask a representative from Grade 1 to write a new word from the word list on the chalkboard.

This competition could last for a week, after which new words could be formed with different learners. Each day the teacher dictated some words for the Grades 1s and sentences for grade 2s to write in their exercise books. The teacher then prepared weekly spelling and reading tests for all the learners. The teacher divided the time between the two Grades, and learners worked independently while she was busy with the other Grade. She gave them a work plan, which was a list of activities they had to do and finish off at their own pace and in their own time.

4.3.2.3.   Lesson activities and methods

Teacher 1, all **stage 1** words mentioned above should be left in the learner's sentence makers after stage 1 Evaluation Test. She said if the learner obtains 10-20 words he or she should be given 20 words of stage 1 in an envelope and matches them into his sentence maker. This learner will now proceed to stage 2 where they should be encouraged to make sentences of their own.

Once the learners have a vocabulary of about ten words, simple sentence construction can commence (e.g., **ke bona mme),** (I see mother), and **(ke rata ntate wa me),** (I love my father). Simple sentences were read with the children daily and these were also given to the learners as homework. This teacher's approach to the teaching reading corresponds with the predictable and sequential stages of language development (Hough & Home, 2001:47). Since most of her experience was in teaching Grade 1 learners, she had clearly mapped out a systematic way in which to build up the vocabulary of the learners. She built the vocabulary to a level where the learners were able to read a basic reader. Her associating the Breakthrough Method to flashcards is supported by IRA (2002:16), as flashcards with individual words written on them are used for this method, often accompanied by a related picture.

In **stage 2,** every lesson starts with phonics and the teacher should keep the phonics for the compilation of the class dictionary. **Stage 3,** is the last stage of the Breakthrough course, the emphasis in this stage being on communication, which will be both oral and written. Teachers should provide the learners with self-made books to compile their own dictionaries, beginning with words in the sentence makers, and they are also expected to write in paragraphs using punctuation marks.

Teacher 2 was asked what reading methods she employed to teach beginning reading Setswana to beginners. She divided her responses into phonics and flashcards to reading. Grade 1 learners were introduced to the basic phonic sound of the letters of the alphabet commencing in the first week of the school year. The phonic sounds were taught together with the letter formation. The following groupings of letters were used, commencing with the easier letter formation and progressing to the more difficult (e.g., one-to-one letter-sound relationships **n, g, ng,** then by identifying long vowels that pronounce the name as **nga,** then to the more complex letter-sound combinations like digraphs which have two consonants such as **ngapa** (scratch). Learners learn the initial sound in a word, and picture representation of the word makes understanding easier.

Phonics frieze (charts) with the letter learnt for the day were read and displayed in the classroom. The previous day's sounds were revised orally and practiced daily before new sounds were introduced. Learners were also introduced to the letter-sound characters via the story for each letter of the alphabet (i.e. **nga**, **ke, le, bo, mo, pa, etc).**

The teacher had a system in place for teaching reading, and it was evident that she taught reading, writing and speaking simultaneously, so that the learners could learn using the association between the different ways of acquiring a language. There was repetition involved, so that children were constantly reminded of the letters. Words and pictures were also associated with the letters. Although she described what she was doing as 'phonics' she was actually making use of an integrated method of teaching beginning reading. Storytelling also helps reinforce the letter taught, as recommended by Stahl (2004:96).

Teacher 2 drew a picture and sets of sentence cards, based on the first set of core vocabulary, **(ngaka, ngakeng, ngapa, ngala, mosimane, bobola, leboga).** On each sentence card she wrote one sentence made up of the core vocabulary. She prepared sentences which were the same as the key sentence taught in the teaching group, with the same core vocabulary used, but in different combinations. She prepared sentences for which learners could draw a picture e.g., **ke bona ngaka; re mo isa ngakeng; ngaka e a leboga; o a re ngapa, mosimane o a ngala.** Each learner in a group received a sentence card and read it, drew a suitable illustration for the sentence card in their activity books and copied the sentence from the sentence card into their activity books. After they completed the given sentence card, they

chose another and did the same thing, this activity was done by individual learners. She then spent most of the time working with those who needed assistance.

Teacher 3's approach to the teaching of reading was an integrated one. She introduced all the aspects of reading in various forms before commencing the actual reading. This can be described as 'holistic' reading. For example, by introducing the characters in the form of pictures, colouring and flash words before the reading actually commences, she created a sense of anticipation within the learners and encouraged them to look forward to the reading process so that they can meet the characters in the story. Chall (1999:7-10) also explored the use of picture books in reading. The teacher ensured that they read in the right direction and that they point to words. Clearly, there was logic in the way she approached the teaching of reading.

More importantly, she ensured that her learners read for comprehension, which was the ultimate objective of learning reading. She used creative methods which encouraged comprehension, like the use of singing techniques; **hlogo, megetla, sefuba le letheka mangole le menwana mangole le menwana,** (head, shoulders, knees and toes) (Chall, 1999:27-30). She assisted the learners to build the necessary drawing (Moore, 2003:28) relevant to the story, so that comprehension was made more meaningful. She also recognised that reading can originate from sources other than charts, instructions on worksheets, or signs (Stahl, 2004:99).

Teacher 3 identified sounds to be treated according to whether they were judged as simple or difficult, depending on the reader they used, she only had one type of a reader, *Matlhasedi*, which Grades 1's used and upon which she planned the sounds to be taught. The reader series used short sentences and repeated the same words several times by controlling the number of sounds that should have been taught.

The teacher selected two learners at random from the class and asked them to read out a page from the reader (*Matlhasedi*). Each learner was presented with a copy of the paragraph from which they could read. The same paragraphs with the learners' names on were used. Once all the learners were tested in turn, a recording was made. According to McEwan (2001:53), there is no other classroom assessment that is as simple, quick and sensitive to the smallest incremental changes in beginning reading ability as a measure of oral reading fluency.

Teacher 4, for the activity for Grade 1, used six groups of ten children, two of which were made up of transfer learners new to the school. These learners were clearly behind and struggled to understand, speak or write Setswana. They had apparently not attended Grade R, a difference of levels that often challenge teachers and make their tasks more difficult. However, separating those learners from others would only perpetuate the problem, whereas including them in other groups is more likely to succeed. Learners were asked to trace the outline of the vowels and consonants twice into their worksheets.

For continuation of the activity, children were also given magazines from which to cut out the letters (vowels) and consonants, then trace them on their worksheet and paste them into their workbooks. Most of the groups had a pair of scissors and glue. The teacher did some concept checking to make sure that learners understood the meaning of 'same' and 'different'. Working in groups, learners were asked to look at two vowels and consonants (language) in the workbook and to identify three "similarities" (**uuu, nnn, bbb, ddd**) and three "differences", **(un, bd, gq,)**. In each case the whole group was asked to come up to the front and report back, which they did by chanting their answers in unison.

She then introduced learners to a book before leaving them to read it, discussed the character they meet and the background against which the story was set so the learner had 'hooks' on which to hang meaning when reading. Learners were grouped into groups of six, and introduced to the characters they were reading about. The pictures of the characters were displayed and discussed. Learners coloured in pictures and talked about each character. The names of the characters were flashed and displayed in the classroom. Flashcards with words in the story to follow were given to each child to learn as homework. Picture books showing the characters were discussed by the teacher and with learners in a group, thus making them familiar with the stories to come. Words were flashed up and the teacher tested learners on those words for reading.

Learners must be taught the left-to-right eye movement, and at the beginning teachers ensure that the child points out the words as they read. This prevents the learner from learning the story off by heart and encourages word recognition. The teacher reads the story, then the children follow and read individually. Once the story is read, a discussion should follow to ascertain whether learners have comprehended what has been read. Reading should not only

be done from books. Charts should be read out and instructions on worksheets should be read. Signs in the classroom and the school must be read so that they become meaningful for the learners. She took turns when reading with her learners, then they read to her and she back to them.

The activity for the Grade 2 lesson was on sentence building. The teacher modelled a sentence on the chalkboard with the key words as subject from the story. She then asked learners, working in groups, to generate sentences containing the key words. However, she offered no explanation as to why they were using the key words from the story they had read, and not those of their choice. By doing this the teacher was not able to make connection between this outcome and what she should be looking for when assessing the performance of her learners. When the researcher asked her what she saw as the outcome of the lesson she struggled to tell her. Although the learners were very engaged with the task, they were given no idea about how long they had to complete it and by what criteria they would be assessed.

Secondly, there is a missed conception that OBE and group work are synonymous. This leads to the notion that, if learners are participating actively in a group work activity and doing constant report backs, they are doing OBE. The teacher appears to struggle to identify meaningful purposes of group work and to link these to the overall outcome(s) of the lesson. Perhaps the hardest nut to crack is the lack of content knowledge that teacher displays. C2005 has done a disservice to the art of teaching reading to the First Grades by underplaying the importance of content in the curriculum and content knowledge in teachers who deliver curriculum.

 She then asked the groups to report back their sentences. Most sentences reinforced traditional gender roles "**mosetsana o fiela lebala"**, (the girl sweeps the yard) **"mosadi o kga metsi"**, (the woman fetches water). In conclusion, she introduced different types of sentences, short and long, and asked them to write theirs.

The five benefits of a multi-grade classroom that impressed the researcher when observing the teacher-learner interaction of teaching reading were as follows: younger learners (Grade 1) actively used the older learners (Grade 2) to develop reading skills and to acquire the knowledge; mixed-age play, offered unique opportunities for creativity and the practice of reading skills; age mixing provided opportunities for learners to find others of matching

abilities; older learners actively asserted responsibility for younger ones and develop an increasingly sophisticated understanding of that responsibility; lastly, it is an advantage to have two grades in one class, because learners who develop faster can easily be accommodated with the activities of the higher grade so that learners are not kept back.

4.3.2.4. *The classroom size (overcrowding)*

School A. Although it had a low enrolment of 35 learners, it was congested because of the small class size. Learners were seated in twos and threes on desks of tightly packed rows. The desks were not easily movable since the desk tops and the seats were connected. There was no flexibility and learners were uncomfortable, with short concentration spans. As a result, Teacher 1 struggled to group them according to their abilities and see those who were slow and keep an eye on them. If they are bundled together it is not easy and may take a longer time to identify them. Visual reminders (charts) were displayed in the classroom.

School B. The classroom was not decorated with pictures or charts on the wall. There were boxes of children's reading books that were also shared amongst learners. Without display of reading pictures and an exposure to a large amount of print in books, learners are unlikely to develop automaticity or become fluent readers. Cunning, Stanovich and Murray (2006:51-59) claim that learners must be given adequate exposure to print in Grade 1.

School C was relatively new, with modern buildings; the classrooms were kept tidy and also clean. Because of the conducive classroom environment, Teacher 3 had sufficient time to work with all the learners. The school served the poor, largely illiterate and isolated communities. In comparison with the other research schools, A and B, this school was more functional, with teachers regularly in their classes and learners moving from class to class between periods quickly.

School D had five rooms, four classrooms and a room for meetings, while other classes were held under trees and in makeshift shacks. It had a combination of Grades 1 and 2, Grades 3 and 4, and a Grade 5 and 6, which according to Miller (2002:32) is a multi-grade classroom. In a combined classroom of Grade 1 and 2, 120 learners were crammed into one classroom that had been designed for 35 learners. Learners from Grades 1 and 2 shared a classroom, which was also used as the teacher's staffroom, administration office and storeroom. In these classrooms the difficult Grades were taught alternatively, i.e., Grade 5 in the first period and

Grade 6 in the second, with one Grade sitting outside and waiting patiently for the other to finish its lesson. It was difficult for learners to focus on their teacher, especially when other grades were having free periods. This also placed unreasonable expectations on the teacher.

Generally, learners in all schools (classrooms) were arranged or seated in church-style facing one direction. From the classroom observation learners did not work cooperatively together, the teacher giving the same tasks for all the learners whereby each worked out his or her activity (individual activity). In this case, teachers should encourage learners to work together and create a flexible learning environment, by giving different tasks, as learners are not all learning at the same pace.

4.3.2.5.   Learning environment (availability of resources)

School A: There were very few posters or print on the walls and the few dusty charts that were visible were very old or else had little relevance to the current syllabi, which is OBE. They lacked resource materials, readers were scarce and teachers handed them out to be shared amongst learners during class periods, after which they were taken back and locked in the staffroom-cum-office.

School B: readers were thus not taken home nor could they be used for homework activities, which made the teacher's job more difficult. In the light of these descriptions, it is clear that lack of adequate resources, insufficient space and relevant approaches of teaching reading to beginners in the whole school has had a great impact on the effective implementation of teaching reading.

School C: the wall was decorated with number charts, alphabet charts, charts about the days of the week, months of the year, phonic charts for incidental reading, and many more. Sometimes, during her reading lessons, the teacher would refer to phonic charts and days of the week, which she called 'rhymes'. The learners recited and sang them, e.g., **malatsi a beke; la tshipi, mosupologo, la bobedi, la boraro, la bone, la botlhano la matlhatso** (days of the week; Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday). This is a favoured combination of methods using activities and approaches selected from the different methods. This teacher had a system in place for teaching reading. It was also evident that she taught reading, writing and speaking simultaneously, so that the children could learn using the association between the different ways of acquiring a language. Readers and

workbooks were more visible in the classrooms and revealed that tasks were completed on a fairly regular basis.

School D: the shortage of classrooms and resources inconvenienced teachers and made their work unbearably and frustrating. This school accommodated learners from Grades one to Six. The majority of the learners resided in the surrounding area and some learners were from the surrounding informal settlements (Tsunami, Serope, Tshwara-nyatsi and Mandela village), which was the result of political violence that had disrupted schools in 1993. The school was located in the area that had experienced the least violence. This situation may have contributed to deterioration in the standard of teaching reading, because most of the learners came from multicultural families and were speaking different languages, such as Zulu, Xhosa, Xitsonga, Sepedi, Sesotho and Setswana, which was seen as a barrier to learning, especially in the Grade 1 classes. Due to the pressures engendered by the (physical) learning environment context, the teacher may not have time to process and think clearly about learners or be able to help them all reach their optimal capability of reading. This in turn may affect the way she structured teaching reading for them.

4.4.   RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teachers were interviewed in order to explore their experiences, perceptions and their views as far as the aspects that posed challenges to the teaching of beginning reading to beginners in Grade 1. All teachers responded to each question asked. Each elicited data according to the questions gathered, which also generated debatable points, as follows:

Question 1: Which methods do you use to teach beginning reading in mother tongue?
Methods used by teachers to introduce or teach beginning reading in Grade 1: Teacher 1 said that for the first three months learners were placed in the School Readiness class, before she could begin introducing the Breakthrough to Literacy (Setswana in particular) Approach. Teacher 2 stressed that Grade 1 learners at School B were placed in the School Readiness Programme for the first 12 weeks (January to March 2011), learning through play, and then she prepared formal instruction in reading using the Sentence Method. Teacher 3 introduced beginning reading by sequencing vowels and consonants in a step by step format called

Traditional Method. Teacher 4 used the OBE method to teach beginning reading to beginners.

Question 2: Why have you chosen to use this method to teach beginning reading?

Teacher 1 from School A said she used the School Readiness class before she could begin introducing the Breakthrough to Literacy programme, as learners would not know how to write when they first enter school. Teacher 1 mentioned that School Readiness is a must! You cannot manage if learners have not done it. Even if things could go well, those learners would not be the same as those who would have attended School Readiness. The advantage of this programme is that hands of learners who attended School Readiness would have been used to writing by the time you get them into formal work.

She mentioned that she liked this School Readiness Programme very much, and also saw the difference it made to the learners. When the teacher was satisfied that the children were ready to read she introduced them to the Breakthrough Programme. Teacher 1 said she used the sentence mentioned by the learners and asked them many questions about what they saw in the picture and to narrate the story, (e.g. **lesea le a lela**) as stage 1.

The Breakthrough Programme is different from other methods because it is based on the learners' own experience (learner-centred). Learners became more independent and took ownership of their work. In the Breakthrough Programme they not only read the word on the board but were able to touch it on the flashcard. They could turn it sideways, upside down and anyhow and at any time, because they had access to it.

Teacher 2 from School B taught beginning reading to beginners by introducing a School Readiness Programme to all learners during the first three months in her class. She started with vowels, **a, e; i, o, u,** and the letter of the alphabets, then formal texts, such as distinguishing colours, matching and transcribing words on flashcards, after which they copied them into their books.

She used these activities as part of determining learners who were ready for formal instruction and reading. Those who could accurately recognise words and read them aloud when accompanied by pictures were then grouped as ready. For Teacher 2, reading words was the key to reading for learners who were ready for formal work. She explained that the

Sentence Method would grow out of the activities that had been done in the School Readiness Programme during the first quarter. Those learners who were ready were then assigned to different Grade 1 classes and teachers began formal instruction in reading and other Grade 1 work. Those who were not ready formed a class called the 'Bridging period', which continued with the school programme for the whole year.

Teacher 3 said she chose the Traditional Method because it was easier for her and the learners, mentioning that it was a learner-centred method recommended by the Foundation Phase teachers at her school. She stressed that it was important to start with vowels because when learners first come to school their hands were stiff; therefore, eye and hand coordination exercise should be reinforced. She said the best thing was to start with the vowel **o** because it was round and easy to write. Thereafter, the sequencing of vowels and consonants in step-by-step format was very important.

Teacher 3 explained that when you begin teaching reading to beginners the best thing is to start with the vowel **o** because it is round and easy to write. She said that if she started introducing vowels in their order; **(a, e, i, o, u)**, learners would simply memorise and recite them because most of them came to school having heard about vowels at home. She stressed that she needed to spend more time on vowels because if the learner had not mastered them he or she would not move to the consonants. She believed in the drilling of letter-sound correspondence (phonics), and indicated that in order to ensure that learners mastered how the word was formed she had to introduce beginning reading by starting with vowels.

Teacher 3 also felt that the learners would have more difficulty in forming words which she regarded as the key to reading and writing in Setswana. The first eight to nine weeks were spent learning the letter sounds. The teacher mentioned that the first letter sound can be introduced on the same learners first day because their enthusiasm for learning is high and this provides a meaningful start for them. It is recommended that the letter sounds are introduced at the rate of one letter sound a day. Although it may seem a lot at first, learners are able to cope with it and look forward to their new letter sound every day. The structured approach is suited to the whole school, whole class approach, but it also works well with individual learners.

Teacher 4 taught sounds and letters in isolation, then words and sentences, and finally read a book. Learners recognised the word, then pronounced it when accompanied or not accompanied by pictures. The strength of these methods lies in ensuring that the learners know how the words are formed. The assumption is that once the learners have learned to form words they can read them in any sentence or text encountered.

Question 3: Are your learners able to read?

The findings were reported as follows:

Teacher 1 at School A said: *when she begins teaching Grade 1's, learners do not actually use books (February to April 2011) in Foundation Phase, and this is an important thing*. She stressed that *you cannot give books to learners who have just started school.* She expressed that there were many written things in the book, even words or sounds that the learners had not yet been taught. She said that is why, they always think that it is better for the learners not to read the book until such time they see that they are now advanced enough, and then they can start reading it themselves. She also mentioned that reading of books starts at the beginning of Stage 2, when learners are being provided with self-made books (word-formation) to compile their own dictionaries, beginning with words in the sentence makers. According to the Breakthrough Programme, by the end of the year learners in Grade 1 should be in a position to read all the Setswana words provided in all stages.

Teacher 2 in school B believed that when learners were still in School Readiness class they could be given books to serve as pre-literacy. Describing the kind of reading that learners did in her class, she said: *They have books, their library books, but they simply page through looking at pictures. Children would just look at pictures and simulate "reading" based on pictures.* She said they usually give them books just to "read" pictures on their own, to imagine or guess what the pictures mean. You would hear one of them say, **"mosimane o apere borukgu bo botala,** (the boy is wearing a green trouser).Yet it is not there in the book. In School C, Teacher 3 said the learners could see pictures, and retell stories. Only incidental reading was being applied. She also stressed that she could not give learners books as early as the beginning of the year as they became confused.

According to Teacher 3, the first eight to nine weeks (February to April 2011) were spent learning the letter sounds. Despite teaching letter by letter some learners did learn words

without necessarily being formally taught. The teacher said they would simply start reading the book from the beginning, and would read it simply through. That will be when they know all the words. When reading, learners need to understand the meaning of the words. Before they can do this they have to be able to work out what the words mean. With the ability to blend, learners are able to read unknown regular words, e.g**. b-a-n-a** (children), she would then give them books to take home to read.

Teacher 4 felt that when the individual sounds or syllables had not been stressed at least at the beginning, the child would be confused later. It is in this context that Teacher 4 appreciated the merits of phonics instruction, because once the child had been made aware of the vowels and consonants blend, she or he could tackle any word both in reading and writing Setswana. Teacher 4 developed ways of addressing the needs of learners while at the same time playing allegiance to the prescribed curriculum of OBE. For instance, she said, "*they mix old (traditional method) and new methods*" (OBE) in their school. Otherwise these learners could still be struggling to read.

Question 4: Do you experience problems when you teach reading?
Teacher 1 described that her major challenge in introducing the Breakthrough approach was the creating of different tasks for different groups of learners. She said she was reluctant to use a group method in the Breakthrough programme because it was tiring and time-consuming. However, she was not satisfied with the differentiation of occupational tasks recommended and stressed by the DoE moreover the content for the bright learners could not be used with under-privileged, slow or below average learners. Flannigan (2006:56) is of the opinion that "*bright learners need to be given challenging work so that they exercise their minds and use their resources and they must be given sufficient time so that they can exercise their brains. There is no way that you can prepare the same thing for all of them*".

Teacher 1 said that Grade 1 teachers were encouraged to stay longer in teaching First Grades, perhaps for about five to seven years, particularly for the teacher who could have attended the in-service course training. This meant such a teacher was even more chained. She said that some learners experienced difficulty in writing isolated words if they had been taught appearing in a sentence. She said that when following the prescribed method, learners tended to write only those that were associated with the original sentence. They would only read that sentence assigned to them, which had been extracted from the lesson in the book**.**

Teacher 2 felt that the School Readiness was originally designed with a white learner in mind, both in activities learners had to do and the language medium in which it was presented. She said among whites the learner simply learn words as a whole, completely by sight in emergent reading, e.g. (**c-a-t) from parts to whole (cat), or whole (dog) to parts** (**d-o-g)** and so on. This is because white learners are exposed to many pictures and type of objects. Learners, who wished to do meaningful reading and writing when they started school, were delayed. Those who were not ready were neglected. She continued by saying that there were other aspects of the Sentence Method that were not useful to teachers or learners. Teachers had to wait until late in the third term to teach word segmentation. She noted that beginning with a sentence did not work for learners and wasted their time. She explained the difficulty some learners experience in writing isolated words such as **buisa** (read), **lesea** (baby), **batla** (need), **buka** (book), etc, if they had been taught appearing in a sentence. Learners tended to write only those words that were associated with the original sentence. For instance, as she demonstrated to the researcher, when learners were asked to write the word **buisa** (read), most could only write **"o buisa buka"** (she is reading a book) as the sentence had been presented to them.

Teacher 2 noted, "*You can't give words that have not been taught because they did not learn syllable separately*". If learners are given a sentence to read or write like **"lesea le batla dijo"** (the baby needs food), they will only know those words. If learners did not learn syllable by syllable, e.g., **"ba, be, bi, bo, bu",** they could only read and write **"lesea le batla dijo"** (the baby needs food).

Teacher 3 said that with the Traditional Method, children seemed to be merely recipients and there was little room for them to experiment and construct the learning actively on their own, without the support of the teacher. While the teacher plays a key role in the child's literacy development by choosing what children have to read or write, there is also a need to create opportunities for reading for authentic purposes. She gave an example of a learner in her class who repeated the Grade 1 three times before she was conditionally promoted to the next grade (due to age). She said that she had a problem in reading and writing Setswana and that it was difficult to tease out where most of the problems came from. She asked if it could be from the method that the teacher used. Could it be from the environment under which the

instruction took place? Could the problem really be with the learner? She said these questions were worth investigating.

She spoke definitely about how learners learn to read, saying that with the use of the OBE method of approach the learner cannot use sounds that she or he does not know and has not been taught, that is what is limiting him or her, this is a fact. She harshly stressed that they can say it, but to write it, no! It is impossible! She felt that when the individual sounds or syllables had not been stressed at least at the beginning, the child would be confused later. She angrily said the problem here is that if it happens by mistake that the subject advisor incidentally pops into your class, and she finds these things (ga, ge, gi, go, gu) on the chalkboard, then it looks as if learners are not learning anything. Because you are not following the required method OBE, while in fact the subject advisor was taught and learned to read using this method (Traditional), now she doesn't want it.

Teacher 4 noted that she was teaching out of and under pressure, and felt that OBE had been designed for classrooms with fewer learners (DoE 2002:19-33). She said that: *if you have your own ways of teaching beginning reading, you can use them, the problem is that this **"ba, be, bi, bo, bu"** are not supposed to appear in learners books, because when the officials come to your class, they expect to see teaching techniques such as: group work, teaching corner, work cards, flexibility or freedom of movement in the classroom etcetera. She said that they want their method of approach (OBE), you cannot write anything you like, and there is no flexibility. She stressed that even the spelling that learners are able to write, it is because she stole syllables, **ba, be, bi, bo, bu** from the Traditional Method. Even with that stealing, where are you going to keep it because you are not supposed to keep it on the chalkboard?*

Teacher 4 said she felt pressured to follow group teaching activities; because of the classroom space, structure and class size that was not a conducive environment for learners. She mentioned that she found them slipping off in her hands, which came to be an excuse for implementing chalk and talk methods (Traditional Method).

Question 5: What resources do you use?
The first teacher said she had a Breakthrough kit that consisted of materials and equipment with the teacher's sentence maker and word cards, the teacher's sentence holder, the learner's sentence maker and word cards, the learner's sentence holder, the learner's storybook, the

word store, the conversation posters, the phonic frieze posters and the Breakthrough readers, complete letters of alphabet, and some flashcards (word cards) that could be used readily. Teacher 1 said they were also assisted in making teaching aids and occupational tasks that were a necessity when instituting this method because learners were taught in groups.

Teacher 2 said the difficulty was that, as a teacher you have to look for materials to present to learners, such as words in flashcards and five sentence strips to read aloud each week. You should always stay focused thinking that if you do the daily lesson plan, you have to collect quite a good range of materials that you will use so that you do the lesson real well. If you do not have materials to use, you will not be able to do anything; the learners will do nothing too. Learners should match identical words in flashcards and then copy them down in their books. Each week, the teacher has to add five more short sentences as it is described above. Since the school had to provide all learners with copies, they had to struggle to get charts to make sentence strips to use as substitutes for books.

Teacher 3 reported that in her school they had introduced beginning reading by using giant pictures, then flashcards, the sentence strips and then ended up with the book. She said that they had different readers, such as *Matlhasedi, Buisa o kwale Setswana,* and *Fofelang Godimo*, which First Graders used and upon which they planned the sounds to be taught. The reader series used short sentences and repeated the same words several times by controlling the number of sounds that should have been taught.

The teacher in School D said that where OBE resources were being used, schools experienced difficulties with the distribution of Learner Teacher Support Materials (LTSM's) and also for Grade 1. These materials were either in short supply, of inferior quality and/or arrived late at some schools.

After having interviewed and observed their lessons, it was clear that teachers studied, had things in common, as well as areas where they differed regarding the way they responded to research questions during interviews, and how they taught beginning reading in their respective Grade 1 classrooms. The researcher obtained a fuller picture of how the classrooms functioned as well as making connections between what the teacher did and said during the reading lesson and other activities of the day.

4.5.   DISCUSSIONS ON OBSERVED CLASSROOMS

Although, the teachers sincerely believed that their efforts in the classroom were yielding fruitful results, the reading methods that many adopted were not conducive to developing skilled readers. Both Macdonald (2002:58) and Labuschagne (2001:60) reported that there was a tendency for children in disadvantaged black schools to become "sound-centred readers", where the pedagogic focus was on getting readers to decode printed information, with little attention paid to meaning. As a result, the learners ended up "barking at print", often in quite a competent manner, leaving the teacher satisfied that the learners can indeed "read". This was clearly reflected in the learner's performance on the Setswana word recognition tasks, where the learners could decode high frequency words in isolation, but performance dropped dramatically when they had to read a short story, and their comprehension was poor.

Responses to one of the open-ended questions asking teachers to explain how they dealt with reading in their classroom situation provided an interesting window onto some of the reading methods adopted in the classroom. For example, all the teachers mentioned the use of charts, of consonants and vowels combinations that are commonly used to teach the various sound sequences in the African languages; **e.g. ma, me, mi, mo, mu,** and flashcards as a way of practicing reading, while Teacher 1 and 2 said they made the children read words and sentences together in chorus in groups.

Furthermore, all the teachers said they made a point of identifying difficult words in a text, writing them on the board and making the children practice reading them from the board. Many of these activities involved attention to print lists of letters or words rather than to the reading of more extended discourse, such as short stories. Although a sound phonics basis is important for reading, especially in the early year, Teaching Early Literacy (2005:11-22), attention to decoding at the expense of comprehension is not beneficial in the long run. Learners need to be exposed to extended discourse in the form of short narrative or descriptive tests in order to practice bringing both decoding and comprehension process to bear on making from the text (Teaching Early Literacy, 2005:11-22).

Teacher 4 recently communicated to the researcher about her unhappiness when an official (subject specialist) told her that such charts were not part of the OBE syllabus and should not be used. Teacher 3 commented on the programme's instructional approach (Traditional) that she appreciated the programme being child-centred, that is it considered the child's experiences and built upon them. This makes learning more meaningful for the culturally disadvantaged child. The various activities in the programme also make an attempt to involve the child actively in learning.

Teacher 4 stated that she liked the instructional strategy (OBE) because it stressed presentation, practice and above all mastery: "*In the teaching of letter sounds, if a child makes a mistake you don't punish him but you go back to the beginning and teach again because he may not have understood well at the beginning stages*". Letter-sound instruction is perceived as a useful aspect of the designed programme as, in the opinion of the teachers, it provides basis for letter and word recognition and decoding (Kamii & Manning, 2002:38-46). Learning letter sounds is also an enjoyable experience with pleasurable results for children: "*… because even when they are outside the classroom, one finds them applying the skill identifying and naming known letters in adverts and other places*".

The strategy for teaching letter sounds which is adopted from International Reading Association (IRA) (2002:30-46) and used in the programme seemed to meet with approval from the teachers. From the teachers' viewpoints it can be concluded that they accepted the principle of letter-sound teaching and the direct teaching of letter sounds putting emphasis on mastery. Teaching letter sounds is therefore, on the basis of the respondents' views above, favourably considered to be an essential part of a Reading Readiness Programme. According to survey research (Lessing & De Witt, 2002:286); teachers currently teaching reading in a Grade 1 class indicated a need for further training in teaching reading.

Teachers, e.g. Teacher 1, (4.3.2.3) and Teacher 3, (4.3.2.4.) described their teaching reading success as follows: "*teaching reading to school beginners is not difficult but it takes hard work, commitment and dedication on the part of the teacher, the learner and the parent. Once this partnership is established at the beginning of the year, and then only success will follow.*" This has been challenged in recent times in light of South Africa's literacy results being among the worst in Africa (Browne, 2007:48). The following discussions presented the descriptions and critiques of each of these methods.

4.5.1. Similarities

Despite the approaches used by the teachers in the study, they did encounter many challenges, as was the case in the entire classroom situation. Some of the challenges were that not all learners understood the Setswana language, making reading difficult. They came from pre-schools that had prepared very little or no School Readiness with the learners. Some parents lacked the time or did not make an effort to assist their children with reading, or did not understand the written language themselves.

Storytelling: The study reveals that all four teachers used the storytelling technique, and that it featured prominently and successfully in the lessons. The teachers' love of oral stories could be attributed to the fact that when teachers teach reading in a Setswana context they draw on their culture. The Teacher's Guide (2003:9) argues that stories provide a context for developing language, which is a prerequisite for learning to read. Stories are also supported by the curriculum for Grade 1, by emphasising that the learners' imagination and desire to hear stories should be promoted (DoE, 2002:5).

Visual materials used to support reading: Every lesson that the researcher observed used pictures or posters among the teaching aids the teachers had prepared. This technique was used to good effect in their lessons by all the four teachers. They had been looking at the picture, now they were telling a story about it. All the teachers put the pictures, posters, magnetic alphabets on the chalkboard and identified words for learners to read, a clear indication that they attached great value to visual materials.

None of the teachers teach reading using books: This was a common element that featured across the four teachers' lessons, with some of the children having had an experience of books from home or pre-school, which needed to be well-observed by teachers. However, there was not a single lesson in which learners practised reading from a book. They depended almost entirely on the chalkboard, flashcards and the charts.

Reading Context: The research revealed that none of the teachers had a deep understanding of the concept 'literacy', and therefore worked on a narrow understanding of it. This came out strongly in the manner they taught reading, only targeting reading words with the learners. The words they did read they came from the stories, and were detached from their contexts

because they were treated separately from them. In other words, learners only understood the words, and not the contexts in which they were used in their stories.

School Readiness Programme: Schools A and B used the Reading Readiness Programme for assessing the progress of the learners. They used formal texts, such as distinguishing colours, matching and transcribing words in flashcards, as part of determining learners who were ready for formal instruction and reading.

Inseparability of reading and writing: There were instances throughout all the teacher's lessons of the skills of reading and writing being seen to be closely linked or inseparable. This was evident in the teacher wanting the learners to write each word presented on the chalkboard, in their workbooks, and in the air, as demonstration of having known how to read it. They all maintained the inseparability of reading and writing and confirmed and used it.

No clear distinction between methods and techniques: One interesting dimension that the researcher noticed both in the interviews and in the lesson observations across the four teachers was that they seemed not to make a clear distinction between methods and techniques. They could not establish the difference between the two, and continuously used them interchangeably. Some of the examples that show the teachers' lack of understanding of the two concepts could be seen as follows: All the teachers said that when they began with their reading lesson it should start with a story. They spoke as if the story was a teaching method and not a technique.

Phonics Instruction: All teachers used the phonic method to teach reading in their respective Grade 1 classrooms. After treating vocabulary words with the learners they came to sounds. Teacher 2 said: *let us say I am going to use a phonic poster, we have phonic posters here, on those phonic posters, and there are sounds from 'A' up to 'Z'. let us say my sound for this week is 'n', that sound, they are going to sound it, after sounding that word, they are going to build the words from that sound, after that the teacher is going to write those words which the children are building from that sound on the chalkboard.*

Teacher 4 used the phonic method to teach reading, and reiterated the significance of sounding words: … *reading should be taught by using the phonic method, and if learners know how to pronounce words in phonics, they will read with ease.*

4.5.2. Differences

Despite the existence of similarities among the research participants, the researcher realised there were also differences. It is valuable to have teachers using different approaches because it provides a wider perspective on how teachers under varying contexts were teaching and how their perspectives were informed by different approaches. However, these were minimal, for example:

Different use of teaching methods and approaches: the four teachers used the following different methods and programme to teach beginning reading to beginners, Breakthrough to Setswana Programme, School Readiness Programme, Sentence Method, Traditional Method, lastly the Outcomes Based Education Approach.

Confusing syllables with words: while Teachers 3 and 4 referred to the syllables, **ba, be, bi, bo, bu**, as 'words', Teachers 1 and 2 labelled them properly as 'syllables'.

Lack of curriculum knowledge: only one of the four teachers had no sense of what the outcomes of the lesson she was presenting might be. The last teacher was unable to make a connection between this outcome and what she should be looking for when assessing the performance of her learners. When the researcher asked the teacher what she saw as the outcome of the lesson she struggled to tell her.

The absence of shared or 'buddy' reading: only the teacher, at School D, emphasised that reading was a vital part of both Grades' (1 and 2) daily programme. 'Buddy' reading was implemented by allowing at least three learners to share a book, but the three teachers neglected this element of shared reading with the learners. Caldwell (2002:45) defines shared reading as reading that is done by the teacher or parents with a learner from a book. With parents it is a one-to-one interaction, but a teacher may read with a group of learners sitting around them. Only one of the four teachers did this, and, as indicated in the section above, they stuck to words either on the chalkboard, flashcards or charts. The researcher feels it was a missed opportunity by the teachers she interviewed.

This study was conducted at the beginning of the year, the time teachers are expected to do shared reading with the learners. As Caldwell (2002:47) argues, this is a practice that is

carried out by teachers in early year classrooms. There could be various reasons why the three teachers did not consider shared reading in their classrooms.

The problem of language: A further language problem was encountered in the interviewing process. Interviews with one teacher were carried out in Sepedi or Northern Sotho. Many of the concepts associated with the teaching of reading, for example, 'method' and 'technique' originate in English. There are no exact translations into Setswana or Sepedi, which has a single word for these two concepts. When the researcher asked about the methods they used to teach reading Teacher 1 said: … *it should be started with a story, we always tell them a story, which goes together with the reading, after that story, and then they have to read the vocabulary words.*

4.6.   CONCLUSION

In this chapter the researcher presented and analysed the data gathered through the use of interviews, lesson observations as well as document analysis. The researcher looked at the demographics of the research participants, and how each one taught reading in their Grade1 classrooms. The researcher also analysed the data by focusing on the following areas: the methods they use to teach beginning reading; the resources they use to teach beginning reading; challenges or problems they face with the teaching methods they currently use and the learners' ability to read; and teachers' choice of the methods; and learners' activities.

However, it is clear from the discussion that the programmes as implemented by the Provincial Education Department (GDE) are failing to upgrade current teachers to fit into the new Foundation Phase syllabus that follows the OBE method of teaching reading. The teaching reading methods conducted by the Bojanala District officials, subject specialists and coordinators indicated that they had failed to address the needs of the teachers and learners, especially those of the Foundation Phase. These methods of approach have impacted a great deal on the current teaching of reading.

Finally, the researcher noted the similarities and differences between them by giving examples. The chapter also covered the overview of key findings, and the potential value of the study as well as the reflection on the research process. The findings that emerged from the data analysis process are summarised in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1.   INTRODUCTION

The awareness that Grade 1 teachers were experiencing problems in teaching reading in the home language and that children in the Foundation Phase could not read inspired this investigation. The study sought to establish what methods of teaching reading in the home language were employed by the teachers in the research area. The aim was guided by the research aim, namely, how teachers in Grade 1 classes of the research area taught reading in Grade 1.

This chapter summarises the findings, makes recommendations to deal with the challenge of teaching reading in Grade 1 and draws a conclusion from the research. It also refers to limitations that might have influenced the research outcome.

5.2.   THE SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The study was a case study and therefore investigated the research schools in depth. This was important because the aspiration was to understand more about the teaching of reading as a phenomenon. The researcher interviewed the four teachers and the data was analysed for patterns. The researcher was careful not to work outside the research question, making sure that all information sought from the participants was in a way linked to it.

This section gives a short summary of the key findings of this study. Looking at the findings, it emerges that insufficient preparation was made for learners, in terms of literacy, by the four teachers. Books were not used during reading lessons nor did they engage in shared reading activities with the learners. This indicated to the researcher that there were elements lacking in the professional skills of the four teachers.

Teacher development: For this reason, in-service courses will need to be planned to take into account the needs of both learners and teachers. If possible, all teachers may need to be

exposed to a variety of alternative approaches and then allowed to make decisions that are relevant to their contexts. Under coercion, the teachers may pretend to be doing what they are expected to do, when in fact they may be doing the opposite, which may not be in the best interest of the learner.

For this reason, designers may need to allow teachers flexibility to try things out. Programmes and methods that set rigid rules in teachers' manuals may limit rather than expand the horizon of the teachers, and hence those of learners. Growth in teaching experience and skill thrives on openness to learn, and tentativeness and sensitivity in action rather than on precision. Given that teachers expressed a need to learn more about how to intervene when learners experienced difficulties in early reading, the researcher would recommend that teachers learn more about how learners acquire language and literacy skills.

There is a need for more classroom-based research that could support teachers in carrying out their own investigations. Administrators may need to create an atmosphere of openness that would allow teachers to document with honesty their teaching practices and share their observations. The shortage of reading materials and texts was apparent. There is a need to develop locally based materials (Read Educational Trust, 2005:38), for example, the stories that teachers and parents tell learners could be recorded on cassette tapes (or electronic storage devices) and be available in print for learners to read and to be read to.

There is a need for two parties to collaborate and consult in an atmosphere of openness which could be based on reflection about practice and willingness to learn, accept and question curriculum ideas. Under that atmosphere, authentic teaching and learning could be conducted on fertile ground. This will go beyond the mundane reading lesson and lead to further development of knowledge and improvement of learners' and teachers' lives.

This could stimulate the creativity of teachers so that they are better able to adapt existing and innovative approaches that meet the required criteria of teaching reading, particularly with regards to First Grade beginners. The approaches and methods should not only be conveyed to teachers in written form, but opportunities should be created where teachers can gain practical experience to develop this skill. Thereafter, teachers need to demonstrate their ability to apply this skill. When the methods and programmes centre on how to teach but leave out teachers and learners they miss a critical component. When teachers do not quite

understand the assumptions of a programme, or are not given room to explore their own understanding and that of the curriculum, there could be confusion and resistance (Macdonald, 2002:60).

Knowledgeable persons should train practicing teachers to develop this skill, for example, by conducting practical workshops or information sharing sessions, with the same outcomes in mind. Without an adequate training in the programme and method, and without a clear and convincing rationale for why teachers had to change from one method to another, teachers could be confused and might even resist the change. Urgently needed is for participants not only to be listened to but also to truly participate both at the design and implementation phases. Rather than coerce teachers to adopt this or that method or programme, the teachers need sources of knowledge and ways to help them develop and analyse the very methods they produce or implement.

Approaches and methods that have been overlooked should be complemented with those identified in this study. Good teaching is always needed, but a good method in the hand of a good teacher is the ideal (Teale, 2000:21).

Understanding the problem better: After the data was collected and analysed, the researcher came to understand the phenomenon much better. The researcher was also able to establish why learners in Grade 1 had literacy problems. Teachers did not understand the methods of teaching reading themselves, but confused methods with other elements of teaching reading.

Teachers' love for stories: All the teachers concentrated on telling stories rather than reading them aloud from the book, which is an oral rather than a literate approach. They appeared to love stories and built their reading lessons around oral stories. Every time they told stories key concepts were extracted and written either on flashcards, chalkboard, or on flipcharts for reading with the learners.

Using of visual materials as a support for reading: They attached great significance to pictures and all regarded them as a valuable technique for teaching reading. They all put a picture on the chalkboard and then put the word underneath it.

The absence of books in the teaching of reading: While research on the teaching of reading attached great significance to the use of books, the research findings revealed that none of the

four teachers taught reading from a book. They either taught reading from flashcards, pictures or posters, chalkboard, or from flipcharts. This was evident in that, after telling stories, they all wrote key words on the chalkboard and asked learners to read them.

Reading Context: The researcher argued that in order to teach learners to read there is a need for teachers to focus on understanding. It should be acknowledged, therefore, that literacy comprises many dimensions, and these must be taken care of by the teachers (Borg, 2005:87). This means that when learners are being taught to read the focus must be not only on the techniques of teaching reading, but also on helping learners to understand what they read. Similarly, the Grade 1 language curriculum supports this by pointing out that when children are being taught to read they must be taught in such a way that they read for understanding (*Government Gazette*, 2008:67).

Inseparability of reading and writing: All the teachers used this style, for example: in their lessons, they all wanted to test whether or not their learners understood the words they had just covered with them by having them written in their exercise books. This helps learners not to forget the words easily. It was in lesson 1 where Teacher 2 asked whether there was someone among her learners who could write the sound **'o'** for her on the chalkboard.

Curriculum: another finding is that the teachers' practice does not conform to the stipulations of the curriculum. However, when the researcher analysed the Grade 1 language curriculum, she could find that certain parts of it contradicted each other. It emphasised issues that did not exist in practice, for example, what the learning objectives say is not taken further by the basic competency area. The curriculum states that during reading lessons, phonics should be taught. However, the same stipulation is not conclusive because the curriculum does not indicate how teachers are expected to do so. The curriculum gives no direction on how teachers are expected to treat certain areas or aspects it emphasises.

Language of the curriculum: finally, the researcher was able to discover, through this study, that language played a key role. Teachers sometimes worked in opposition to the expectations of the curriculum. That the four teachers were all Setswana-speaking, and the syllabus was written in English, prevented them from understanding some of the expectations of the curriculum. The probable reason why the syllabus was written in English is that it catered not

only for the Bojanala District but also for the entire country, and English is generally considered the country's medium of instruction.

Finally, this study not only helped the researcher to understand the impact of teachers' beliefs on practice and the methods teachers use to teach reading in Grade 1 in mother tongue, but it also informed the researcher's own practice as a university lecturer. Another interesting dimension is that before this study was conducted the researcher had the notion that reading and writing were two separate entities. This study enabled the researcher to understand that they are two parts of the same phenomenon, and cannot easily be separated.

5.2.1. Reading Methods Used

The Traditional Method of teaching reading in Setswana, as described in Chapter 4, seems to share common features with those of other languages, such as Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho and English (Teale 2003:119). This method might also have found an African classroom a fertile ground for establishing roots, since the educational theories endowed teachers with more authority in teaching (Allington 2002:83-85). Teachers, as leaders, were to lead the children in learning. The Traditional Method in teaching beginning reading was supposed to walk together with the child, but in essence the teacher was not on the side but ahead of the child, and so determined the pace and direction with little or no input from the children learning to read.

Within the history of teaching beginning reading in Setswana, the Traditional Method has until fairly recently been used without being challenged. However, in other countries and languages, teachers and researchers have shared different views about how much teachers should use direct instruction and rely on basal readers in teaching children learning to read (Au, 2003:47). The Traditional Method, as described by (Teale 2003:119) and other authors of the reader series Ntsime and Mampe, might have aimed at ensuring that children do not experience reading difficulties. In the process of avoiding reading difficulty, the Traditional Approach tended to be over used in reinforcing the phonic skills and neglected other aspects of reading and needs of different children.

While the teacher plays a key role in the child's literacy development by choosing what children have to read or write, there is also a need to create opportunities for reading for authentic purposes. Within the constraints of the reading programme, authors, like Ntsime

and Mampe, left teachers some discretion on how to proceed in teaching depending on what their children knew (Cunningham, Cunningham & Moore, 2004:11). The role and freedom of the teacher within the programme is limited and yet important. It is important in the sense that the decisions the teacher makes contributes significantly to the teaching and learning in class.

The Sentence Method is a continuation of what was covered during School Readiness, as the teacher is supposed to present children with words in flashcards and five sentences in strips to read aloud (Alloy & Gathercole, 2005:273). In reinforcing the words or sentences that had been taught, the teacher is supposed to divide children into groups under four leaders, and then children would read flashcards. Teachers using the method were to take it on faith that children should learn to read by first introducing the sentence, then later in the year focus on decoding those sentences. The method placed emphasis on separating the times during which different aspects of reading should be done, starting with word recognition in a sentence and then later decoding.

On the other hand, children using the Sentence Method were limited, since explicit instruction in different aspects of reading, such as decoding, were withheld until later in the year. They depended on the teacher to give them sentences and had to wait for the third quarter to learn how words were formed to make meaning. In the Sentence Method, children were not encouraged to construct their own meanings and texts, which tended to deprive them of ownership of the learning process (Brand, 2004:32).

Curriculum 2005: the teaching approach adopted in South Africa is that of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), with Curriculum 2005 being the curriculum approach developed for South Africa. OBE, consisting the foundation of the South African curriculum approach, can be described as follows: a learner-centred, results-orientated approach to learning based on the beliefs or assumptions that all learners must be granted the opportunity to reach their full potential, that the learning environment should create a culture of learning, and that all stakeholders involved must be cooperating partners (Morrow & Schickedanz, 2006:275).
OBE is not planned around specific prescribed subject matter which learners are required to learn, but rather around a set of Critical Outcomes and Learning Programmes. The latter contain eight Learning Areas, each with their own Learning Outcomes. In OBE, the process of learning is considered as important as the content. By spelling out the outcomes to be

achieved at the end of the process, both the process and the content of education are emphasised. The outcomes are intended to encourage a learner-centred and activity-based approach to education (DoE, 2002:10-11).

Phonics instruction: is a way of teaching reading that stresses the acquisition of letter-sound correspondences and their use in reading and spelling. The primary focus of phonics instruction is to help beginning readers understand how letters are linked to sounds (phonemes) to form letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns and to help them learn how to apply this knowledge in their reading. Phonics instruction may be provided systematically or incidentally. The hallmark of a systematic phonics approach or program is that a sequential set of phonics elements is delineated and these elements are taught along a dimension of explicitness depending on the type of phonics method employed (Gordon & Brown, 2004:6).

All four teachers used the phonic method to teach beginning reading in their respective classrooms. Phonics refers to sounds. According to Rose (2006:31), phonics enables learners to match letters with the sounds they make. This study revealed that the four teachers incorporated phonics, although they seemed to have a shallow or superficial understanding of it. This was evident from the way they interpreted and incorporated phonics during their reading lessons. The teachers appeared not to understand that this is merely a convention and does not have any reality in the phonology of the language. Nor did they use any typical strategies from phonics to develop learners' phonological awareness.

The Grade 1 curriculum indicates that when teaching about phonics, the "Grade 1 teacher must first test to see if learners know the sounds of letters" (National Literacy Trust, 2006:31). Although the syllabus points out that when learners fail to master phonics, the teacher must teach them the vowels and then consonants, it does not provide any guidance on how to do this. Thus the syllabus is open to misinterpretation. This means that teachers teach 'vowel order' because of the direction they get from the curriculum itself. There is great inconsistency between what the curriculum says and what happens on the ground and what the literature says (Stahl, 2004:335).

5.2.2. Reading programmes used

Primary Education Upgrading Project: this programme had several components in the school programme, namely classification and differentiation of children in the programme, structure and period allocation, School Readiness and the scheme of work for teaching a mother tongue language in the First Grade. During these periods the teacher was expected to provide children with tasks that would enhance reading skills when they finally had to read. The aspects of preparatory reading included visual skills, auditory perception skills, reading readiness and incidental reading.

Threshold: according to the Teacher's Manual, *Learning Through Play*, learning does not begin a few months before or after the child enters Primary School, but rather very early in the child's life. Play is the major vehicle of learning, serving as thinking time, language time, problem-solving time, memory time and investigating time. Through play a child forms a rich layer of experiences, an 'experiential reservoir', as Moore (2003:12) calls it, which the child needs when moving into abstract thinking. The School Readiness Programme supplied by the DoE allocated periods to reading and writing, called Preparatory Reading and Preparatory Writing. The main purpose of Reading Readiness was to stimulate the learner's need for reading and encourage the desire to read. It stated clearly that teachers are not supposed to offer formal instruction in reading until learners are ready (Brand, 2004:32).

Since teachers complained that for some learners three months for school readiness was too long, some adjustment may be needed so that children are not deprived of instruction when they deserve it. For that reason, teachers would need to be provided opportunities to systematically document their own ways of teaching, as they referred to it. In that way, the methods and programmes will be enriched and will gain vitality rather than the sterility that comes out of routine.

Breakthrough to Setswana: The Molteno Project, (2000:2) is a programme that prioritises what the learners bring with them to school from home, and is a mother tongue literacy course. It is a programme based on a learner-centred rather than teacher-centred approach, and also on language experience approaches. The philosophy and method are committed to the improvement of the quality of both the learning experience and the learning environment for Primary School children. It uses the oral skills which the child has from home as the basis for learning to read. The Breakthrough Programme views all aspects of the language

(reading, writing, speaking and spelling) as interdependent. For this reason they are all integrated in one lesson rather than split into separate and unrelated components. In other words, it uses the child's first hand experiences and natural interests as motivating forces in helping them to acquire skills (Murray, 2006:200).

Breakthrough to Setswana has several unique features, for example, the teacher teaches reading to a group of learners from a conversation poster in the teaching corner, while the other groups are given occupational tasks. In the teaching corner, the teacher teaches the learners the key sentence for the day from a chart or poster. The whole sentence structure is considered first before its parts. There is a balance between meaning and phonics (*Journal for Language Teaching*, 2005:45-62).

5.3.   RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the preceding information, the following conclusions and recommendations are made for the improvement of practice in the ensuring selections. In a South African situation, it would be difficult to know whether teachers follow the manual or not, unless one directly asks and observes what they do. This communicates that certain parts of the curriculum need to be revisited in order to maintain a high degree of consistency throughout the document.

Reading from books is also emphasised by the curriculum, which according to the observations does not seem to take place in practice. This points out a gap between theory and practice, a disjuncture that can only be narrowed if classroom visits to teachers are made. This is one main reason why the District needs a Foundation Phase advisory teacher, which it currently does not have. Teachers cannot manage in isolation but need direction, and since the Foundation Phase curriculum has just been revised and implemented in phases, an expert or an advisory teacher needs to be there to assist the teachers to interpret it. The teachers seem not to follow what the curriculum says, not on purpose, but because they have difficulty in interpreting it.

It is recommended that knowledge of the suitable approaches and methods of teaching reading to beginners be included in the Curriculum for teachers in training. Higher Education Institutions responsible for teacher training should empower teachers in training to generate teacher-authored reading approaches and methods to be used. This study recommends more

collaboration between teachers and District Administrators when planning and delivering teaching approaches and courses. Teachers and Subject Specialists need to keep abreast of new developments in the field of language and literacy development in order to effectively challenge and critique new approaches. They should also be supported in carrying out investigations into teaching and learning in their classrooms.

In order to improve the situation the study recommends the drawing up of syllabi of methods or approaches of teaching beginning reading in all languages, specifically Setswana in the Foundation Phase, leading to the advantage that teaching beginning reading methods would be taken more seriously than it is currently. This would also help to narrow the gap between same-level learners at different schools, in terms of the indicators of the exposure to teaching reading methods to beginners. It would minimise the chances of learners transferring from one school to another being at different levels in terms of these indicators.

Basic things teachers can do are as follows: create a stimulating learning environment that encourages learners to read; use storytelling; reading and writing must be taught and practiced; phonetic development; word recognition; Breakthrough words are words that are commonly used when reading, possibly to be taught in sets, ranging from the simple to the complex, visual stimuli in the classroom; picture or word matching; reading of road signs; teaching reading using themes; involving parents in reading; and technology encouraging reading (in the form of television, video or DVD games, computer and cell phones, all common in most homes) (*Government Gazette*, 2008:67).

Future research would benefit from the inclusion of a large participant population. This population should be more diverse in its gender, geographical region, and its background. While the findings of this study indicate that the methods or approaches to teach beginning reading to beginners has its strengths and weaknesses, insufficient data was collected to make a definitive conclusion about the effectiveness of the methods to teach beginning reading to beginners. Further research should be conducted to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching beginning reading methods as an intervention strategy in learning to read earlier than Grade 1 in the learner's school career, and as a follow-up strategy in learning to Grade 1.

5.4.   LIMITATIONS

One of the major limitations of this study was size of the sample. There were only four participants and they were taken from a relatively small population. The participants were all of the same gender and were located in the same geographical region, and the results obtained cannot be generalised as being the situation in the Bojanala District schools.

Another limitation is that when the researcher went into Teacher 4's class she realised that she had a large class of 60 learners, an unusual situation, which may have influenced the outcome of teaching and learning

5.5.   CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to establish how reading in the Home language was taught in Grade 1. From the report of findings in Chapter 4 it can be concluded that the qualitative approach followed in this study, together with the research instruments that were part of this approach, were appropriate to the research because they helped to realize the aim of the study.

5.5.1.   Conclusion from observations

The report on the classroom observations confirms what the researcher had noticed as a teacher in the field, that is teachers employ different methods to teach reading yet all belong to the same school circuit. This suggests that there is uncertainty about the teaching of reading in the schools. A common thing is that all four teachers used the story as a technique to promote reading which is a good practice. However, teacher's expertise in teaching reading was restricted by the new curriculum, and that is sighted as a major cause of the reading problem.

The NCS did not prescribe any approach or method to teach reading in Grade 1, but indicated the expected outcomes. It was up to the teachers to decide how to help the children to achieve the outcomes. Instead of boldly applying what they knew as trained teachers, they were very

cautious about implementing the curriculum guidelines. A lack of clarity about the NCS could be the cause of teachers' uncertainties and confusion when teaching reading. Each of the teachers used a different programme and different methods, and each had a different reason for doing it. It does not seem that the training they received about the NCS touched on the teaching of reading.

It can also be concluded that poor or lack of resources and overcrowding in the classrooms added to teachers' problems. In instances where there was overcrowding the teacher was forced to dominate the lesson because it was not easy to divide children into groups. In other instances, where there were few books and children were forced to share, no group reading could take place. The manner in which reading was conducted was thus influenced by the classroom environment.

The observed poor reading by the children could be the result of how they were taught to read. All the teachers taught individual words on flashcards and asked children to read them. Teachers also read a story from a poster and wrote some of the words selected from the story on the chalkboard. While the researcher maintains that this is a good way of introducing reading, and as Allington (2002:14) explains, stories provide a context for developing language which is prerequisite for learning to read, the disadvantage of what was observed is that the story was read by the teacher and not the children. Children were used to reading individual words or sentences from a poster but were not regularly exposed to a full text. This could be the reason behind their slow and poor reading.

A positive aspect, however, was that teachers realised the interrelationship between reading and writing because they did both simultaneously. This awareness could train children to be observant about what they read, knowing that they would have to put it in writing. Also beginning the reading lesson with a story helped to promote the understanding of the individual words that the teacher extracted from the story. This is a good way of learning because the words are learned within context.

5.5.2   Conclusion from interviews with teachers

From the teachers' interview responses it is clear that there is insufficient support to help them adjust their teaching to the new curriculum. It is not a matter of expertise because all are fully qualified teachers with a good number of years experience in teaching. The problem could be adjustment to the new curriculum.

With regard to the question about which methods the teachers used to teach reading, it can be deduced that they are not well trained in these. Since a teacher could say the school beginners' language is very poor because they have no early learning experience, but at the same time say using the School Readiness Programme for reading at the beginning year is a waste of time, is evidence of a poor grasp of some teaching strategies for language development and reading. Another example was when a teacher said she was using the School Readiness Programme even though the researcher observed she was using the Traditional Method. She was actually drilling children on alphabet sounds and later adding consonants to the vowels. Although it could be assumed that teachers in a specific school used the same methods for teaching, the same could not be deduced about teachers in the same circuit. There is clearly no collaboration among schools, even though they were in the same circuit.

The responses from Question 2 of the interviews shows that teachers chose the method they used for teaching reading either because they liked it or found it easy to use. The fact that they could not explain the strengths or weaknesses of the methods suggests that their knowledge of the method was superficial. In the researcher's opinion, the teacher who said she used the School Readiness Programme before starting with formal reading and later followed with the Breakthrough programme was on the correct track for promoting successful reading, however she lacked the academic words to explain why she preferred the methods. It could be concluded that the methods were chosen because of the successes she had experienced when using the methods.

The teacher who explained that she taught sounds first and later combined the sounds with other letters used the phonemic approach, which was encouraging. However, that she did not refer to the approach as the phonemic approach indicates that she knew little about the

approach. The researcher's view about the teachers' lack of expertise about reading methods is authenticated by the responses of two teachers who indicated they used the traditional approach because it was easy for them to use. In other words, they did not consider the strengths of the other methods that could help children to read. There is also no certainty that they knew other methods of teaching reading.

The researcher's observation about the children in the research area not having reading skills was confirmed by the responses to Question 3 of the interviews. That teachers were still involved in teaching children to read individual words suggests serious reading problems in the schools, and further research is needed. The responses to Question 4 of the interview add to the conclusion that the teaching of reading at these schools is problematic. Teachers' acknowledgement of this, together with what the researcher observed, is sufficient evidence to draw this conclusion. It is clear that teachers lack guidance as to which approach to use when teaching reading.

From the findings of this research the researcher concluded that Brits District of Education does not have a clear, specific policy on methods of teaching reading to beginners. This is shown by the absence of syllabi with the methods of teaching beginning reading in Setswana. Absence of the Learning Programmes also implies absence of guidelines on the teaching methodologies that teachers should adopt in the teaching of reading to beginners. This, coupled with the teachers themselves not having received much guidance on how to teach reading to beginners, as established by the Review Committee on Curriculum (2005:3-5), leaves them with no option but to adopt those methodologies that they remember from their own high school teachers and college lectures.

Another confirmation of teachers' lack of support and guidance is seen from the choice of resources they made to teach reading. They all used different resources for different reasons and the resources were what they knew before. There was no evidence of the NCS having provided guidance in the selection of resources. It can be concluded that the research question was sufficiently answered.

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5.8.   APPENDICES

5.8.1   Appendix a: letter to the department of education (doe)

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT AT SCHOOLS IN BRITS DISTRICT

Date:	**19 February 2011**
Name of Researcher:	**Phajane Masello Hellen**
Address of Researcher:	**4 Baobab Street**
	Chantelle
	Akasia, 0182
Telephone Number:	**0722481996**
Fax Number:	**012-4294800**
Email address:	**phajamh@unisa.ac.za**
Research Topic:	**Methods used for reading instruction at Primary Schools in the Brits Districts of North West Province.**
Number and type of schools:	**4 Primary Schools**
District	**Bojanala (Brits) District**

Madam/Sir

I hereby request permission to conduct research study dealing with **methods used for reading instruction at Primary Schools in the Brits Districts of North West Province. T**his study forms part of the requirement for the completion of my Masters' Degree with the University of South Africa (UNISA).

This study will examine perspectives of Foundation Phase teachers, teaching reading for the first time to beginners in Home Language (HL), (Setswana) in the area of Mmakau. I have purposefully selected your schools. The findings of the study will help to provide information that will facilitate in the implementation of the best method/s of teaching beginning reading to beginners. The methods that will be used to collect data will be classroom observation, focus group interview and document analysis. I would like to focus on Grade 1 classrooms. I will assure that there will be no classroom disturbance during the project. I intend to collect data during the months of February to April and June to August 2011.

Please find the attached letter of approval from the Brits District Department of Education.

Kindest Regards

Phajane M.H

5.8.2 APPENDIX B: Permission from Department of education (Brits district)

Department of Education

Lefapha la Thuto

Département van Onderwys

BOJANALA DISTRICT

NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Private Bag X5061
Brits
0250

Tel: (012) 729 1191
Fax: (012) 729 5287

OFFICE OF THE AREA MANAGER: LETLHABILE AREA OFFICE

TO: H.M PHAJANE

UNISA

PRETORIA

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Your request to conduct a research in some of our schools in the Bojanala District is immensely appreciated.

Your research topic is pertinent and informative. I have no doubt in my mind that you will communicate the findings and outcomes of your research to the Area Office that will assist to improve the quality of learning and teaching in our institutions.

D.M Motoma

D.R Motoma

Circuit Manager

5.8.3 APPENDIX: C

Verbatim transcription of semi-structured one-to-one interview with Grade 1 teachers

Researcher: What method/s do you use to teach beginning reading in mother tongue (Setswana)?

Teacher 1: I start with a poster description so as to introduce readiness programme which is the programme that prepares children for formal learning, at the beginning of the year, learners are trained on how to move their fingers, write in the air and also writing in the sand, it prepares learners emotionally and socially. After three months, I introduce reading by putting a picture poster on the chalkboard, and then build a sentence on the sentence holder, for example a baby is crying **(lesea le a lela)** and ask them to read the sentence while pointing at word by word. Thereafter, they build their own sentences on their sentence holders and come in front to read them to me and copy them in their exercise books. I liked this approach very much and I saw the difference it made to the children (laughs loudly).

Teacher 2: For the first three months we introduce reading by introducing readiness programme, which is done to prepare children for formal classes where they will be required to write, to prepare them so that when they write and draw they should not have problems. In this school we introduce beginning reading by telling a story using giant pictures, then flash cards, then sentence strips and then end up with the book. At that time the child would be able to take the book and read. That is how we are still introducing reading in first grade.

Teacher 3: First of all I tell them a story and also asked the question that would elicit a story, and then I use sounding of words, because in our mother tongue, we first deal with vowels, and then consonants, letters, build words from consonants and vowels. We have soft sound vowels like **a, e, i, o, and u,** and hard sound vowels like **r, n, m, w, s, l, h, b, d, k, f, t, j, y, g, p, etc.** Then at a later date I would teach; **ra, re, ri, ro, ru,** and after that they form syllables, from syllables they form words and then sentences.

Teacher 4: here it is difficult for anyone to say that they are perfect in the way they teach reading to the beginners, because they are still young and should be started, I firstly provide them with a picture from which the story was derived. Thereafter, I start with the basics, first

the learners must be able to recognize and read all the letters of the alphabet, and then he or she needs to know the sounds associated with each other. They must know the sounds, vowel sounds, for example; **a, e, i, o, and u.** I write them on the chalkboard or on the flashcard because what is important is for learners to see those vowels and the sounds they produce. They need to know how to apply their letter knowledge. From the beginning they should be taught to blend the sounds and hear the words, for reading, as well as the word we speak can also be written.

Researcher: Why have you chosen to use this method/s to teach beginning reading, do you have reasons for that?

Teacher 1: Because, the method is not teacher centred it is learner centred, what I mean here is that in a teacher centred class, the teacher dominates the discussions, and in a learner centred class, you give learners different activities, then the teacher only facilitates and monitors the entire learning situation.

Teacher 2: Because, right from the beginning, the idea was then instilled in the child's head that words are written separately just as they come out of the mouth in speech. I use the sentence that comes from the children. They have been looking at the picture, now they are telling a story about the picture.

Teacher 3: Because the learner can catch up easily, he or she will not have problems with the spelling of words because as soon as he or she sounds the word, he or she can feel the letters, e.g. a boy **(mosimane)** the sound 'mo' comes.

Teacher 4: I wanted to be assured that when a learner advances to the next grade, he or she must know how to read, and when he or she comes across the word must recognise it.

Researcher: Do you experience problems when you teach reading? If yes, what type of problems do you experience?

Teacher 1: Yes, the problem is that the teacher holds the key, while professing to give children opportunity for ownership, such ownership or sentence was sugar-coated; the teacher already had a preplanned agenda to get a particular sentence for her purposes. The lucky child's contribution or sentence was used as part of the larger reading lesson, that ownership

or sentence only belonged to that particular child and other children's contributions or sentences fell on the way side.

Teacher 2: Yes, because starting reading by introducing sentences to beginners is very difficult for them, you should start first with vowels, if a learner knows how to read and write and spell vowels should also know alphabets very well. I see this as the right medicine for teaching beginning reading. The problem with the sentence method here is that the child will only read that sentence assigned to him or her which had been extracted from the lesson in the book. You (the teacher) write out all the sentences from the whole lesson in the book, you, the teacher, that is your job. Then when children read, you reshuffle those sentence strips. You tell them, "you read! you read!!". In that way, they cover up the lesson while they read sentence strips because if you give them the whole book, they will not even see lines. They won't follow the reading direction. You see?

Teacher 3: The problem with the traditional method is that it takes the child a longer time to be able to read, as the child was reading one letter sound by one letter sound. I have noticed that a teacher here plays a key role in the child's literacy development by choosing what children have to read or write. Again in the process of avoiding reading difficulty, this method tended to be overused in reinforcing the phonic skills and neglects other aspects of reading and needs of different children.

Teacher 4: There are problems, yes, because the more the changes in reading approaches, the more the confusions will be. Despite all these, teachers should know that sounds are very important because it is where words are made from.

Researcher: Are your learners able to read?

Teacher 1: No, they can't, how can they use books? Big books like this one, they simply page it through it does not mean anything to them. The child can see pictures, and tell stories, but I do not think she or he can read a book. Once they know a lot of sounds, they will take books and the teacher will guide them. That's all that counts! You can't give children books, they get confused. When you give them books (imitates the child paging through the book in a rush) children are hurrying to see what is in the next page. Once the child has mastered word formation, she or he never has difficulty, then he or she can be introduced to book reading.

Teacher 2: No! no! no! when we begin teaching beginners we do not actually use books. This is another important thing, they can't. How can they use books? If you give a child a book, what do you want the child to do because he or she does not know how to read? It makes no sense to give to these things (**"dilo tse"** meaning children) that do not know anything. There are a lot of written things in the book, even words or sounds that the child has not yet been taught. So that is why we always think that it is better for the child not to read the book until such time that you, as a teacher see that she or he is now advanced enough, then they can start reading books themselves. Perhaps we nurse them too much. I do not know.

Teacher 3: These children (pointing at her class) do not know how to read on their own, because they have just started. It will be better reading towards the end of the year because they would know how to read a lot of words. Even here in class, we do not give them books, they do not touch even recommended book **Matlhasedi** (Stars). Up to now the first quarter, they are still learning word formation. When they already know, when they clear, they will not have any difficulty in reading, they will simply start reading the book from the beginning and they will simply sail through. That will be when they know all the words.

Teacher 4: Yes, only when we use pictures, for example; we use pictures, you put a picture that shows that this is a baby **(lesea),** and underneath that picture you put the matching word. You put those words in a container, and this is after they have read and known the words. Then you ask them to pick those words and match each word with the relevant picture.

Researcher: What resources do you use?

Teacher 1: There is a book from Breakthrough that helps you with some ideas. Sometimes I bring local newspapers and copy magazine pictures for children to read and paste on their books or to write stories. I use posters, because they can touch and see the letters and words, they can compare letters and words made out of cards with those in their sentence makers and on the charts. We use LTSM's supplied by Molteno Project in a kit, the one you see there.

Teacher 2: I have words in flash cards, sentence in strips, e.g. alphabet charts, days of the week and months of the year charts, duplicated and laminated for display and use with the children. There is also the class reader, but it is not explicit on how the teacher has to use it.

Teacher 3: Provision of the material is one of the reasons I am satisfied with this method. There are graded reading materials such as reading books **(Matlhasedi)** ditto masters, other teaching materials and teacher's manual. In addition, the principal fundraised and sought support for materials we need from major companies and businesses.

Teacher 4: The government, supply schools with Learner Teacher Support Materials (LTSM's), but teachers still supplement on these teaching materials by making their own, e.g. pictures, writing letters of alphabet on flashcards, cutting and pasting pictures relevant to the themes, context and content.

Researcher: End of the interview, I am so grateful.

5.8.4 APPENDIX: D

Verbatim transcription of focus-group interview with Grade 1 teachers

Researcher: What method/s do you use to teach beginning reading in mother tongue (Setswana)?

Teachers: we use different types of methods. We use multi-level teaching because learners vary according to their level of ability. We use methods and approaches such as traditional, sentence, OBE, Breakthrough to Setswana, we also use storytelling, whereby the teacher tells a story, using pictures and a big book for that matter, and we also allow the learners to retell the story and also dramatise it, some learners learn best through songs, others like rhymes, and others can understand and cope by listening while the teacher is teaching. Some can even formulate a game from an activity, learners grasp a lot as they play, it is learning through play, and (they smile and make eye contact with each other).

The researchers' point of view, teachers responded very positively regarding the combined methods of teaching reading to beginners. One teacher said; "I got lots of ideas to present reading in an interesting way". Another teacher appreciates the integrated reading methods. Most of the teachers indicated that they experienced frustrations during teaching beginning reading to beginners, they recommended more workshops on approaches and methods of teaching beginning reading to first grade learners.

Researcher: Why have you chosen to use this method/s to teach beginning reading, do you have reasons for that?

Teachers: we liked these methods very much and we saw the difference they made to the children, we are comfortable using them as long as we are adjusting them to our need and style. Children needed to be taught sounds before they could read books, once the child has mastered word formation; she or he never has difficulty.

 They said; "we did not choose this method of curriculum (OBE), we only receive a word from the top (National level), served on a tray (policies)". They just say, right, now there is a curriculum change, we are implementing it now! But we don't know how it comes about no! no! we don't know. We are controlled from the top to the central government. Sometimes

inspectors and subject specialists do not agree with the changes, if you try to speak out to them that this approach does not work well for learners, they would say, 'it works in other schools, and if you cannot do it, leave by the door', so you better be careful because that is their preferred way of silencing teachers who raised questions (by asking them to leave through the gate or expelled). There is no flexibility, we can do things that we think can work well and fast for us and our children, but we cannot do it freely, we can't. We can try our ways of doing things, but the subject advisors do not have to know about them.

Researcher: Do you experience problems when you teach reading? If yes, what type of problems do you experience?

Teachers: the problem is we haven't done training in any method, it was not even offered at the college of education during our training years. You can only do it on your own, perhaps on part time basis. At times we mix things (old and new methods) and use other approaches. When we are in class, we use our own way that we think will propel children forward, we try hard to expand children's minds in ways that we can. There nothing wrong with all the methods even when most teachers criticize them, they are dynamic, too dynamic. It is just that we need proper training, (loudly and emphatically). For that reason, teachers would need to be provided opportunities to systematically document their own ways of teaching, as they referred to it. In that way, the methods and programs will be enriched and will gain vitality rather than the sterility that comes out of routine.

From the researcher's observations, all the teachers indicated that even though they were dedicated to their work, there are some problems and challenges that they came across. For instance they complained that they were overloaded with work in their classrooms, and sometimes learners needed more attention on specific activities (reading). They also indicated that they need a remedial teacher in the grade 1 classrooms to assist them with those learners who experienced barriers, especially in home language. They noted that most of the learners experienced barriers in reading and spelling Setswana and felt that the remedial teacher would assist them to address that subject matter.

Researcher: Are your learners able to read?

Teachers: only when they had demonstrated that they could read and write some words and sentences correctly and independently, we also believed that children should not be exposed

to books until they were ready to read a lot of words and sentences, (bored facial expressions).

From the researcher's point of view, the focus group interview, as well as the observations made in Grade 1 classrooms revealed that the teachers used different methods to teach beginning reading Setswana to beginners and also to accommodate every learner's learning needs and level of ability. The data that was analysed also revealed that the teachers used different lesson plans and activities to include all the learners in teaching and learning.

Researcher: What resources do you use?

Teachers: when teaching reading we use pictures, puppets and other relevant resources to arouse the learners' interest; we use shared reading, whereby we use a big book which has got visible pictures with limited text; we use pictures and real objects. Whenever we teach, we use relevant teaching aids. We make sure that the teaching aids or resources are attractive and visible enough. Teacher 3, Mam not to say that I'm speaking for my school, but you can see that our classrooms are conducive to teaching and learning to read. They are bright, attractive and full of visible teaching aids or resources on the walls. The resources are also used for incidental reading for the learners and walls. The teaching aids are also used for incidental reading for the learners and most importantly to attract their interest and to accommodate each individual in reading.

We improvise in many ways to make resources that are relevant and attractive to arouse the learners' interest in reading. We make sure that the resources are learner-friendly and that every learner can use them, (they nod).

Researcher: End of the interview. Thank you so much.