

**SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES IN FOUNDATION  
PHASE IN MAGAKALA CIRCUIT**

**by**

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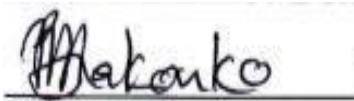
## DECLARATION

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I declare that the above dissertation is my work and that I have used or quoted and acknowledged all the sources by completing references.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Makonko', is written over a horizontal line.

**DATE 30 September 2022**

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

- My beloved children Poncho, Lefa, Karabo, and Tshegofatso Makonko were always there for me through possibilities and impossibilities, supporting and encouraging me.
- To my mother, Magdeline Hlageng Maboko, my late father Moses Makgape Maboko andd mother-in-law Selogadi Ngwanatau Makonko who has valued education but never had an opportunity to experience it themselves.
- To my sisters Thabitha, Maggy, Tlaka, and Ruth Segaoswi Fenyane, whom I want to show that everything is possible through education.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study aimed to explore how teachers support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. This qualitative study was conducted in five primary schools. In each school, three foundation phase teachers were interviewed telephonically. A case study research design was employed. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Generated data was analysed using thematic approach. Four (4) findings emerged in this study. The findings of this study revealed that Foundation Phase teachers have a broader and limited understanding of support for learners with reading difficulties; teachers used rigid teaching approaches as opposed to flexible teaching approaches to structure reading support for learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase; Foundation Phase teachers lacked information and communications technology (ICT) skills needed to support learners with reading difficulties using ICT and; different stakeholders are not involved in supporting learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. The study recommends that Foundation Phase teachers should attend workshops and register with institutions of higher learning to have a common understanding of support for learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase; teachers should consider the diversity of the learners they teach when choosing teaching strategies and use flexible teaching approaches to support reading; intensive workshops for ICT skills should be provided to Foundation Phase teachers; and different stakeholders should be involved to support learners with reading difficulties. The study concludes by presenting the need to align the current teacher training offerings with the current ICT needs of the learners in the Foundation Phase.

**Keywords:** support; reading difficulties; Foundation Phase

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ANA	:	Annual National Assessment
CAPS	:	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	:	Department for Basic Education
DoE	:	Department of Education
DBST	:	District Based Support Team
EGRA	:	Early Grade Reading Assessment
FSS	:	Full-Service Schools
ISP	:	Individual Support Plan
LSTs	:	Learner Support Teachers
LoLT	:	Language of Learning and Teaching
LTSM	:	Learner Teacher Support Material
NCS	:	National Curriculum Statement
NFFTR	:	National Framework for Teaching of Reading
NRS	:	National Reading Strategy
NRP	:	National Reading Panel
PIRLS	:	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PSRIP	:	Primary School Reading Improvement Programs
PALS	:	Peer Assisted Learning Strategies
PISA	:	Programme for International Student Assessment
SBST	:	School-Based Support Team
SGB	:	School Governing Body



SIAS	:	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SNA	:	Support Needs Assessment
SMT	:	School Management Team
STD	:	Secondary Teachers' Diploma
SPTD	:	Senior Primary Teachers' Diploma
ACE	:	Advanced Certificate in Education
JPTD	:	Junior Primary Teachers' Diploma



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## **CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Reading skills are expected to be mastered in the first three years of learning. It is expected of the learner to master reading fluency and comprehending skills at Grade 6 according to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study [PIRLS] (PIRLS, 2017). However, there is evidence of learners who finish their primary school learning still struggling to read. Learners are being made to progress to the Intermediate Phase without having gained knowledge and skill to read properly. They never get to gain any reading skills; hence, they keep falling behind even as they progress into higher grades (PIRLS, 2017).

In South Africa the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National curriculum Statement Grades R-12 [NPPPPR] affords learners the opportunity to be progressed without meeting the minimum promotion requirements as they should not be retained for longer than four years in a particular phase (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011:9). This is an indication that learners who are experiencing reading difficulty are not supported to the fullest. Additionally, the report on the 2014 Annual National Assessment [ANA] results highlights that the DBE acknowledges that Foundation Phase learners struggle to respond to questions and learners are unable to interpret pictures or give opinions when required (DBE, 2014:10); hence the need to establish ways of addressing the anomaly. This explored how teachers support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase in the Magakala Circuit (Limpopo).

Moreover, the South African education system has policies and legislative frameworks that promote support for learners with reading difficulties in schools. The policies include the Education White Paper 6 on special Education needs, building an inclusive Education and Training system [EWP 6] (DoE, 2001), Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support [SIAS] (DBE, 2014), National Reading



Strategy [NRs] (DoE, 2008), and the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R- 12 [NPPPPR] (DoE, 2011). The introduction of the inclusive education system in the country was meant to support all learners experiencing reading challenges in mainstream schools that are within their vicinity[EWP6] (DoE, 2001).

Furthermore, the above policies give an account of measures aimed at bringing about a fair balance in the education system by accommodating and supporting learners with challenges to learning, including reading. The EWP6 (DoE, 2001) is credited for systematically giving a full account of the principle of inclusion that seeks to promote meeting the full range of learning needs to overcome barriers in the system. Thereafter, the SIAS- DBE (2014) was introduced to achieve the main objectives of inclusivity for all learners by identifying the learning barriers, support needed, as well as developing an informed support for the programme (DoE, 2014). The policy is intended to ensure that the process of needs analysis and support were relevant in terms of the target learners, as well as the context under which the challenges manifest.

Despite the policies stipulations in place, learners in the Foundation Phase continue to be marginalized by not getting the appropriate support they need. PIRLS (2016) ranks South Africa as the lowest performing in international reading literacy studies. The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in South Africa also revealed that 68% of Grade 4 learners perform far below a proficient reading level, 37% at the proficient level and 9% advanced reading level (NAEP, 2017). The NAEP finding shows how Foundation Phase learners continue to struggle with reading when they progress to the Intermediate Phase.

Even though the ANA (DBE, 2011) was phased out, the results in Home Language for Grade 1, 2 and 3, in 2012, 2013 and 2014 were showing slight improvements. However, Foundation Phase learners cannot read at the appropriate level of age (DBE 2014). In addition, the ANA results grade 1-6 indicate that South Africa has the lowest average score compared to all developing countries similar to the findings in the PIRLS study. The Minister of Basic Education's report in 2011 on the ANA indicates that poor foundation in literacy for the majority of learners accounts for the difficulty in meeting grade progression requirements within the system. South Africa's performance in PIRLS

(2016) is evidence of urgent need for the introduction of a reading programme aimed at encouraging and maintaining appropriate literacy levels nationally (Naidoo, Reddy & Dorasamy, 2014). The DBE acknowledged that the Foundation Phase learners have difficulty responding to questions as required. Furthermore, these Foundation Phase learners are unable to interact with pictures by either interpreting or giving an opinion when required (DBE, 2014). The study conducted by Rule and Land (2017) explored the type of support in reading that Foundation Phase learners receive. The findings of the study revealed that the only support learners receive in reading progression is from their teachers. There is no support from parents or caregivers and other stakeholders (Venketsamy and Sibanda, 2021).

Learners with reading difficulties need appropriate support to improve their reading abilities to meet enhance the expected developmental levels. However, despite all efforts in terms of research, policy guidelines, reading campaigns or, support mechanisms, Foundation Phase learners still face difficulties regarding support for reading. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how teachers in Magakala Circuit support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Learners are progressed to the Intermediate Phase without having gained the knowledge and skill to read confidently. This is despite the fact that reading skill are expected to be mastered in the first three years of learning (Pace, Alper, Burchinal, & Golinoff, 2019). However, learners never get to gain any reading skills and they keep falling behind even as they move into higher grades (PILRS, 2016). Furthermore, it is expected of the learner to master reading fluency and comprehension skills in Grade 6. There is evidence of learners who finish their primary school learning are still struggling to read fluently and with comprehension.

The National Policy for Promotion requirements gives learners the opportunity to be progressed without meeting the minimum promotion requirements since they should

not be retained for longer than four years in a phase (DBE, 2011; DBE,2019; DBE, 2021). This is an indication that learners who are experiencing reading difficulties are not supported to the fullest. Furthermore, the report of the 2014 ANA results has shown that the DBE acknowledges that Foundation Phase learners struggle to respond to questions and learners are unable to interpret pictures or give opinions when required (DBE, 2014); As a result of the poor reading and comprehension skills there is a need to establish ways of addressing the anomaly.

### **1.2.1 Research Questions:**

The following questions guided the study:

#### *1.2.1.1 Main Question*

- How do teachers support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation phase?

#### *1.2.1.1 Sub-questions*

- How do teachers understand support for learners with reading difficulties?
- Which strategies do teachers use to support learners with reading difficulties?
- Which methods can be used to enhance support for learners with reading difficulties?

## **1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

### *1.3.1 Aim*

- To explore how teachers support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase.

### **1.3.2 Objectives**

- To explain teachers' understanding of support for learners with reading difficulties.
- To describe strategies that teachers use to support learners with reading difficulties.
- To recommend methods that could be used to enhance the support for learners with reading difficulties.

## **1.4 THE RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

The NRS (DoE, 2008) views reading as part of efforts towards nation-building for purposes of promoting confidence in modern society. Reading is significant because it builds the confidence of the learners. Literacy is fundamentally based on reading ability.

The ability to read does not merely emphasize the decoding process, but also the comprehension and information recalling process (Program for International Student Assessment, [PISA], (2016). Landsberg, Kruger and Swart (2011) emphasize the importance of support for reading skills for learning to adapt to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

My 27 years as a Foundation Phase teacher and the national reports show that learners in the Foundation Phase are unable to read in their mother tongue. This study is significant since it explored how teachers support learners with reading difficulties in Foundation Phase in Magakala Circuit of Limpopo Province. The study may benefit the learners, teachers, district support team, and the DBE with other teaching methods that may assist in supporting learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase.

## **1.5 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Gay, Mill and Airasian (2011) suggest that, in credibility, the researcher must consider and address problems that are not easily justified. Trustworthiness in qualitative research addresses the validity, transferability, dependability and conformability of studies and findings. Mareek (2014) asserts that credibility contributes to belief in the trustworthiness of observations, triangulation and prolonged engagement. Similarly, Bertram and Christen (2016) assert that credibility is addressed when the participants are asked to review both data collected by the interviewer and the researchers' interpretation of data. Triangulation refers to a combination of research methods that enhances the credibility of the research findings (Bertram and Christiansen, 2016). The researcher ensured that the information discovered and explained throughout the data collection and analysis are correct and trustworthy. I used triangulation by employing more than one research instrument when I collected data for the purpose of trustworthiness to provide evidence and clarification from various sources (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

## **1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethics in research give the researcher advice on how he or she will conduct the research. These are the principles that will guarantee that research is conveyed in a manner that serve the best interests of the respondents (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, Johnson and Christensen (2014) describe ethics as the principles and guidelines that assist the researcher in conducting ethical studies. In qualitative research, a researcher must inform the participants using a consent form before the research could be conducted. According to McMillan (2014), the consent form should include the following: purpose of the research, the description of the procedure to be followed and the duration of the study that will take participant to complete. The consent form must ensure anonymity, privacy and confidentiality.

Participation in the research must be voluntarily and participants must have right to withdraw or refuse to participate.

In this study, the ethics clearance certificate was obtained from the University of South Africa (Unisa)(Appendix A). Permission letters to conduct research from the Limpopo Department of Education (Appendix B) and from the principals of selected schools are also attached in the (Appendix C). Participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the study so that they could decide whether to participate or not. They were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the research any time they wished. They were assured that the data collected would not be disclosed without their permission. The researcher has reported the process honestly without misleading professional colleagues about the findings. The participants were requested to complete informed consent forms (Appendix F) in which they agreed to partake in the research and were informed that they may withdraw whenever they wished .

## **1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study was limited to schools in the rural areas of Magakala Circuit. Due to COVID-19 protocols, the researcher was not able to meet with the participant's face-to-face; therefore the participants were interviewed telephonically. The following challenges were encountered during data collection: network and load-shedding were a major problem to most participants. Since, the Limpopo Department of Education gave permission to conduct research during breaks and after schools only, it was difficult to conduct interviews with participants. As a result, it was a challenge to get some of the teachers who are travelling every day to their homes delayed the researcher to finish with the data collection as planned. The research was conducted with Foundation Phase teachers because they were the focus of the research and as a result, findings of this study could not be generalized to the other phases where learners also experience reading difficulties.

## **1.8 DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPTS**

### **1.8.1 Support**

Support is an approach that focuses on providing help from within schools, staff, parent, and learners (Donald, Lazarus, & Moolla, 2014). In this study, the concept refers to the support and guidance that teachers of the Foundation Phase give to the learners experiencing reading difficulties. In supporting reading, the concepts of reading remediation, reading intervention, remedial reading, and reading support are used interchangeably in literature. For example, reading remediation refers to the process of assessing and instructing struggling readers (Caldwell & Leslie 2013). Therefore, in this study, the concept of support is used to refer to a process where learners who experience reading difficulties are supported by their teachers through the use of different strategies and methodologies to improve their reading abilities.

### **1.8.2 Foundation Phase**

Foundation Phase is the early stage of formal learning from grade R to 3. It is defined as the early stage of formal learning, namely grade 1, 2 and 3 (National Education Policy Act [NEPA], 2003; South Africa Schools' Act (SASA) 84, 1996). In this study it means age 6 to 10 support for learners with reading difficulty in the Foundation Phase in Magakala Circuit. The significance of focusing on this early stage of formal learning, namely, Grade 1, 2 and 3, resides in the fact that the prerequisite skills in reading need to be implemented during the early stages of learning. This is the initial stage that introduces young children to a school environment which forms a bridge between home and school (Hulme, 2012)

### **1.8.3 Teaching strategies**

Strategies are conscious, internally variable psychological techniques that aim at improving the effectiveness of or compensating for the breakdowns in reading comprehension, in specific reading tasks and in specific contexts (Karami 2021). According to the DoE (2008:19), reading strategies are ways of solving problems that the learners may come across while reading. As a result, teaching strategies



are approaches that teachers in schools use to support learners with reading difficulties to be fluent readers.

#### **1.8.4 Learner Support Teachers (LSTs)**

Learner Support Teachers (LSTs) are trained teachers with the appropriate information and knowledge to support teachers in the classroom. Specifically, these teachers are for remedial education, inclusive education and special needs education (Gauteng Department of Education, 2004: National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), 2014). Mahlo (2013) supports that, these teachers have specific skills and the capability to change the curriculum, to simplify learning among learners with different needs and prevent learning failure. In this study, the Learner Support Teachers are accountable for managing, supporting and recommending intervention strategies to classroom teachers or subject teachers on how to help learners facing learning difficulties in their classrooms.

### **1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

The following chapters outline the study:

**Chapter 1:** presented the background and introduction, the problematic statement, research questions, the rationale, the statement, the purpose, and objectives of the study.

**Chapter 2** presents the Literature Review. It explores support for learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. It also focuses on strategies that the teachers use to support learners with reading difficulties and how can support be enhanced for learners with reading difficulties.

**Chapter 3** provides the methodology used. It consists of research design, method and instruments of data collection, areas of study and the procedures of sampling the participants, collection procedure, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

**Chapter 4** provides presentation and discussion of the findings.

**Chapter 5** highlights interpretation of the findings and give a summary of the study.

## **1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The Chapter presented the introduction and background, problem statement, research questions, the research aims and objectives, the rationale for the study, preliminary literature review, primary theoretical framework, research design and methodology, credibility and trustworthiness, ethical considerations, the limitations of the study, lastly definition of the concepts. In the next chapter, the Literature Review of contributions of other scholars on support for learners with reading difficulties in Foundation Phase is presented. The theoretical framework that guided the study is also presented in the next Chapter.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

*“The ability to read well can open doors to job opportunities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and is important for economic growth, reading for enjoyment also has important emotional and knowledge benefits” (World Bank, 2016).*

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The United Nation Millennium Summit held, emphasized reading difficulties as a global challenge. At this summit policy imperatives pertaining to reading received considerable critical attention during the United Nation Millennium summit held in New York in September 2015. Apart from it being a global challenge, the concept reading difficulties is broadly perceived (Gove & Creish, 2010). Evans and Jones (2011) assert that reading improves the literacy levels, social skills, personal wellbeing, and meaningful activity in learners. However, Akyol, Cakiroglu and

Kuruyer (2014) posit that reading difficulties can have a negative impact on the learner's social skills, personal wellbeing and schoolwork. This can result in, learner's self-esteem being affected by reading difficulties. As mentioned above, reading difficulties among learners received attention in different parts of the world. UNESCO (2015) and the National Research Council [NRC], (2010) reported that most learners across the globe experience reading difficulties. Furthermore, reports by the (PIRLS, 2016), PISA (2015) the sub-Sahara Africa [SSA] and South and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality [SACMEQ], 2016) reported that learners find it difficult to progress in life due to their reading difficulties. The PIRLS report (2016) that three quarters of South African learners were not able to reach the lowest international benchmark on reading. This report confirms the reading challenge experienced by most South African learners.

South Africa has nine provincial education departments and Limpopo is one of the nine Provincial Education Departments. Within the province there are ten districts. The districts are grouped and sub-divided into circuits where Sekhukhune East Education District has 16 circuits. The focus of this study was the Foundation Phase of Sekhukhune East Education District (Limpopo) in Magakala Circuit. The next section outlines what reading in the Foundation Phase entails.

## **2.2 READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

Reading is an ability to recognize words, letter symbols, pictures and be able to make meaning out of it or the ability to construct meanings of the text (Jennings 2001, as cited in Sari, Rosmalina & Erling 2019:10). Coltman and Place, (2013 as cited in Hugo & Lenyai 2013:100) define reading as the drawing of meaning by the reader from the written language. It is a linguistic task in which the Foundation Phase learners need well-developed language skills, including phonemic (sound) awareness, vocabulary and comprehension to read (Decaires-Wagner & Picton, 2009 as cited in Northcott 2019). Furthermore, Jennings, Caldwell and Lerner (2013:3) see reading as process that is learned and not acquired naturally. As a

results, although teachers should note that learners have the innate potential to learn to read, they have the role to develop reading skills in learners. For teachers to be able to do this task, they first need to understand the following different stages that are crucial when teaching reading to the Foundation Phase learners.

### 2.2.1 Stages of reading in the Foundation Phase

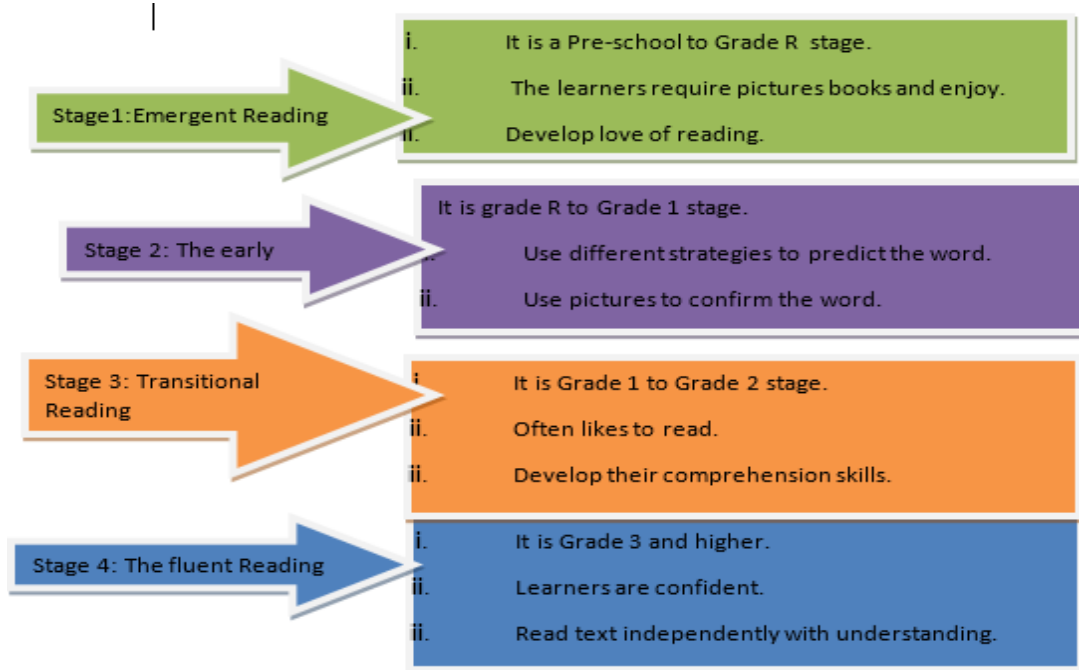
Stages of reading are based on the reading experiences that learners have and not on their chronological ages or grade levels. Several models of reading development have been proposed to describe different stages that the learners undergo to become skillful readers or independent readers (Phala, 2019). DoE (2008:9-10) outlines six stages that learners undergo to become skillful readers namely, pre-reader, emergent reader, early reader, developing reader, early fluent reader, and independent reader. Table 2.1 describes what each stage of reading entails.

<b>Stage 1: The Pre-reader</b>	Holds books and turns pages correctly; Recognizes the beginning and end of book; Listens and responds to stories; Interprets pictures; Pretends to read;
<b>Stage 2: The emergent Reader</b>	Uses pictures to tell stories; Knows some sounds and letters that make the sound; Knows that the print runs from left to right and from top to bottom;
<b>Stage 3: The early reader</b>	Knows most letter sounds and names;

	<p>Recognize some words;</p> <p>Can tell an age-appropriate story.</p>
<b>Stage 4: The developing reader</b>	<p>Uses pictures to make meaning;</p> <p>Uses knowledge sentence structure;</p> <p>Uses phonics to decode words;</p>
<b>Stage 5: The early fluent reader</b>	<p>Recognizes most familiar words on sight approximately 200 words;</p> <p>Reads fluently at least 60 words per minutes;</p> <p>Uses punctuation to enhance comprehend.</p>
<b>Stage 6: The independent reader</b>	<p>Uses cueing systems such as phonics, language and general knowledge;</p> <p>Reads fluently at least 60 or more words;</p> <p>Understands books with unfamiliar settings;</p>

**Table: 2.1. Stages of Reading: Teacher's Handbook, DoE, (2008: 9-10); Chall (1996); (NFFTR, DBE, 2019:9-10)**

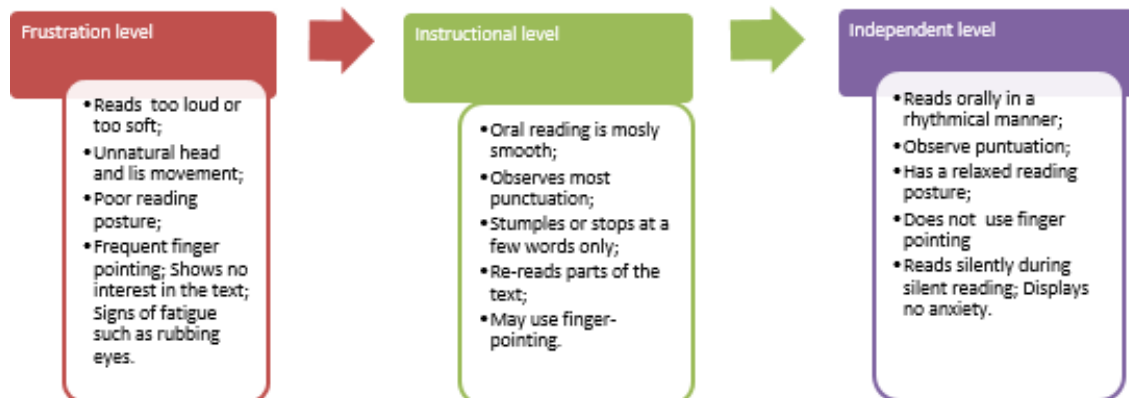
In support of the DBE (2008) six stages outlined above, the NFR (DBE, 2019:91-93) further describes other stages of reading development as early emergent readers and fluent readers by the end of Foundation Phase. Phala (2019) confirms the description and added that learners learn reading gradually as they undergo different reading stages to become independent readers. Pretorius, Jackson, Mckay and Spaul (2016:16) also agree that learners undergo four stages of reading for them to become fluent readers as shown on the Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1 Reading Stages: Sources: Pretorius et al (2016:16)**

It is evident from Figure 2.1 that Pretorius et al (2016: 16) confirm the different stages that reading entails for a learner to ultimately become a fluent reader. As a result, teachers in the Foundation Phase must be aware of these different stages for them to be able to support learners. Figure 2.2 in DoE (2008); DBE (2019:91) acknowledged that for a learner to become an independent reader they must undergo three different levels of reading. Therefore, Foundation Phase teachers should be aware of three different levels of reading to support learners with reading difficulties.

## 2.3 LEVELS OF READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE



**Figure 2.2 Three Reading Levels: Source: DoE (2008:38); DBE (2019:91)**

Figure 2.2 describes what happens at each level briefly. The next section presents a description of what happens at each reading level.

Reading level refers to the level at which the learner reads the text. Each level is equated to the number and type of errors he or she makes during oral reading (Lapp et al. 2007, as cited in Nel & Nel 2016).



The National Assessment Framework for Reading [NRF] (DBE, 2019) and DoE (2008) distinguished three reading levels as follows:

**i. The Frustration level:**

During this level, the reading matter is so difficult for the reader. The learner recognizes less than 90 percent of words and less than 50 percent of comprehension.

**ii. The Instructional level:**

During this level, the learner needs to learn certain words and their meanings beforehand to read and understand the text. The learner recognizes 95 percent of words and 75 percent of comprehension.

**iii. The Independent level:**

During this level the learner can read with understanding and enjoyment of the text. The learner recognizes 99 percent of words and 90 percent or more of comprehension (Ekwall & Shanker 1989). According to Phala (2019), reading levels are associated with the pace at which the learners read a particular printed material within a specific period. Furthermore, based on the uniqueness of the learners and the context in which the learners read, it is also imperative to note that learners' reading pace may be influenced by different factors. Findings of this current study revealed that these factors include the way in which the learners have developed reading skills and how the learners were supported by their teachers to acquire the reading skills in the Foundation Phase.

Moreover, it is imperative to note that some learners develop reading skills quickly and need less support from the teacher, whereas others develop slowly and need more support from the teacher. However, it is significant for teachers to know that all these learners who are at different levels need to be supported. Teachers, therefore, need to consider the learners' reading level when attempting to understand how learners learn to read to be able to provide adequate support (Phala 2019). Failure to consider reading levels result in reading difficulties among learners.

## **2.3 READING DIFFICULTIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

Reading difficulties manifest in a learner through the inability to memorize, rehearse the text they read and the struggle to meet the requirements of reading and viewing. The learner can read the words or letters in reverse, unable to identify the letters and some learners' just refuse to read any text (Gillet & Temple 1990 cited in Katherine 2020). According to Paramore and Dougherty (2011, cited in Weaver, 2019), reading difficulties are defined as an unexpected reading failure that cannot be accounted for by other disabilities. The statement above explained reading difficulties in the Foundation phase. The next paragraph outline factors that causes reading difficulties in the Foundation phase.

## **2.4 FACTORS THAT CAUSE READING DIFFICULTIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

There are numerous and complex factors that cause reading difficulties in learners (Gillet, Temple & Crawford, 2012; Naidoo, 2014). These factors emanate from within or outside the learner. Factors that emerge from within the learners are referred to as intrinsic factors and they may include neurological, cognitive, intellectual, language, and physical factors. Factors emanating from outside the learners are referred to as extrinsic factors. The learner, school, home, and community environment are causes of extrinsic barriers. The intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence reading difficulties in Foundation Phase learners are discussed in the next sub-section.

### **2.4.1 Intrinsic factors**

As indicated, intrinsic factors refer to those factors that emanate within the learner. The learners are born with them, and as a result, they do not have any control over them. It is important for Foundation Phase teachers to understand these factors so that they can be able to support the learners who experience reading difficulties (Gillet et al. 2012).

***i. Neurological and cognitive factors***

Jennings, et al. (2010) and Naidoo et al (2014) posit that neurological and cognitive factors take into consideration the way the individual's brain operates during the process of learning to read. During the reading process, Foundation Phase learners can be allowed to use different mental activities such as memory abilities, visual processing, language-related abilities or auditory process despite having support at home or in the community.

***ii. Intelligence and intellectual factors***

Foundation Phase teachers must be able to identify these types of problems at an early stage using intelligence tests. Intelligence tests measure the scholastic aptitude of the learners. Gillet et al. (2012) also argue that there is a correlation between learners' intelligence and their reading achievement.

***iii. Language factors***

Foundation Phase learners can express their thoughts using oral language and written language that involve listening and speaking which forms the basis for reading. According to Naidoo, Reddy and Dorasamy, (2014) there is poor achievement of learners from African language speaking homes on the early transition to English. Gillet, et al. (2012) confirm that learners with language difficulties have difficulty with reading owing to challenges in retrieving words and as a result, they struggle to recall the names of objects or to describe the words. Naidoo et al. (2014) indicate that English is a medium of instruction in most schools. However, Foundation Phase learners experience difficulties in comprehending the language. I agree with the assertion because findings of this current study confirmed this claim (see Chapter 4).

***iv. Physical factors***

Many physical factors could affect reading in the Foundation Phase. These might include vision and visual problems, hearing and auditory problems, gender differences, and general health and nutrition. This study focused on only two factors, namely, vision and visual problems and hearing and auditory problems as discussed next.

#### ***v. Vision and visual problem***

There are different types of visual problems, for example, amblyopia (lazy eye), myopia (near-sightedness), phoria (binocular vision), hyperopia (farsightedness), astigmatism, aniseikonia and strabismus (cross eyes) (Gillet et al; Naidoo et al. 2014). It is therefore important for Foundation Phase teachers to be able to identify learners with such visual problems so that they can be able to give them support during the reading process. For example, a learner with myopia (near- sightedness) may experience a challenge when expected to read a text from the board in the Foundation Phase. It therefore becomes the responsibility of the Foundation Phase teacher to identify such a learner and place the learner closer to the board or in severe cases, to refer the learner to an eye specialist for surgery or spectacles.

#### ***vi. Hearing and auditory problems***

The hearing and auditory problems include not hearing properly. In the Foundation Phase, the learner is expected to learn the letter name and sound letters. However, if the learner is experiencing hearing problems, the learner may not be able to follow the teacher's instruction. It therefore becomes paramount for the Foundation Phase teacher to be able to identify such learners so that they can be able to use the correct instructional methods that will cater for such learners with hearing problems as revealed in the current study (see Chapter 4).

### **2.4.2 Extrinsic factors**

Extrinsic factors include all factors that result from outside the learner, which the learner has no control. Other extrinsic factors that affect Foundation Phase learners include the environment and the socioeconomic factors of the learner or culture (Gillet et al. 2012).

#### ***i. Home environment***

The home is the primary environment of any Foundation Phase learner and it forms the basis of learners' cognitive growth and development (Jennings et al. 2010). Serpell, Barker and Sonnenschein (2005), Neuman and Dickinson (2000, as cited

in Chansa-Kabila 2014), Naidoo et al. (2014), and Mafokwane (2017) further states that parents' own literacy habits also influence the learner's interest and motivation to read. For example, learners develop a positive attitude towards reading if the parents instill a love for reading books from an early stage either by buying books, reading bedtime stories or even taking them to the library. As a result, learners who are not exposed to such reading opportunities are at a risk of developing negative attitudes towards reading. Geske and Ozola (2020) states that the family's socioeconomic position influence learners' reading literacy achievements. Spaul, (2016) and Naidoo et al, (2014) state that most families affected by unemployment find themselves living in poverty and as a result, such circumstances prevent parents from exposing their children to early reading experiences which, in turn, impacts negatively on the Foundation Phase learners' reading abilities. I agree with their assertion that lack of reading material in families rob learners an exposure to reading material from an early stage.

## ***ii. School environment***

According to Naidoo et al. (2014), qualifications and proficiency of teachers are another factors that causes reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase learner. The National Reading Strategy (DoE, 2008) and Phala (2019) emphasize that Foundation Phase teachers are not acquainted with how to motivate reading inside and outside the school. Their inability to motivate learners also contributes to reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. Furthermore, the teacher-learner ratio and the class size also impact reading in the Foundation Phase (SACMEQ, 2011; SACMEQ, 2016 & Mafokwane, 2017).

### **iii. Community environment**

Learners are part of the larger community. As indicated above, most of the communities are under-resourced and lack libraries in South Africa. As a result, many learners lack the opportunities to be exposed to reading at an early stage, especially those learners whose parents cannot afford to buy reading materials for their children. When learners learn to speak the language that is spoken mostly in the community even if the language is not spoken at home, it has influence her reading ability. Masalesa (2016) confirm that the influence of the language spoken in the Ndebele community influenced the Sepedi-speaking learners' language acquisition. As a result, the influence of language acquisition results in manifestations of reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase.

## **2.5 MANIFESTATION OF READING DIFFICULTIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

Learners experiencing reading difficulties are often referred to as vulnerable readers or struggling readers. Struggling readers are who have experienced barriers with school-based reading Lenski (2019), whereas Caskey (2019) describes them as learners who ineffectively struggle with written content. It is, therefore, important for teachers to be able to identify the common problems that the learners display to provide them with support. Joubert et al. (2014) refer to the common reading problems as barrier to reading which are explained next.

### **2.5.1 Skipping of words**

The learner will be given a text to read and, when reading, the learner will omit some of the words. The words might be intentionally omitted because the words are too difficult for the learner to read or unintentionally because the learner did not see the words. For example, when the learner skips the word **“cook”** from the sentence: **“I cook delicious food”** the learner may read: **“I delicious food”**. Gillet and Temple

(1990:361) indicate that when learners purposely leave out words, it is because those learners cannot decode and read them.

### **2.5.2 Regression**

This problem occurs when the learner's eyes move back to words that have already been read. For example, the learner went back to read the word "l". In this case, the learner is reversing words by reading them backwards. It is caused by a limited sight vocabulary and difficulty with the reading direction from left to right or having neurological problems (Gillet et al. 2021).

### **2.5.3 Swapping of letters**

When reading a text, the learner might swap letters especially those that have similar shape such as the letter "b" and "d" or "p" and "q". For example, the learner reads the word "bog" for "dog". This problem is well-known and is often referred to as reversals. [PSRIP],(DBE:2018; Spear-Swerling, 2018).

### **2.5.4 Insertions**

Insertion refers to adding or inserting of certain words when reading. During the process of reading, the learner may add words that are not there in a text. For example, the learner may read: "The boy is kicking and the ball" for "The boy is kicking the ball" in the text (Spear-Swerling, 2018).

### **2.5.5 Replacements**

When reading, a learner may replace one letter with another which almost looks the same. For example, the learner may read: "The bog is chasing the rat" for the text: "The dog is chasing the rat." A learner may also substitute a word which starts with the same letter and looks like the given word, for example "woman" and "women". In addition to the problems identified above, lists poor reading comprehension, inadequate reading fluency, lack of vocabulary and negative attitude towards reading as the four major causes for reading problems (Le Cordeur, 2017). As a result, to address such manifestations of reading difficulties, Foundation Phase teachers should know how to support diverse learners who display various forms of reading difficulties.

## 2.6 SUPPORT FOR READING DIFFICULTIES IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

Different countries have different methods of supporting for such learners. Therefore, the Researcher outline the following countries' methods for support learners with reading difficulties, such as United States of America, United Kingdom, India, Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa.

### 2.6.1 United States of America

The National Institution of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD] and United State Department of Education National Reading Panel report (2000, cited in Ness, 2016), underscores the importance of teaching reading using a systematic phonemic approach and identified the five key skills that produce a good reader. Each learner with reading difficulties is unique; therefore, a combination of approaches and various strategies should be used to meet the needs of those learners (DoE 2008; Mercer & Pullen 2011:267 as cited in Phala, 2019). Similarly, the Primary School Reading Improvement Programme [PSRIP] (DBE, 2018) confirms that it is important for all learners to know that reading is a code and that we are all capable of learning the code. But some of us learn the code quickly while others take time to learn the code. It is further stated that even learners who have progressed through school without learning to read can be supported unless she or he has serious difficulties to read. It also stated that to master the technical aspects of reading, learners should master the following skills, **technical skills** such as **phonemic** and **phonological awareness**; **alphabetic principles**; **vocabulary**; **phonics** and **sight words** and **comprehension skills** which are vocabulary; modelling; general knowledge; summary and fluency (Scalon, Kimberly, Anderson., & Sweeney, 2017).



### **2.6.2 The UK (United Kingdom)**

In the United Kingdom (UK), teachers use the direct strategy as one of the teaching strategies to teach English. They use techniques such as dictation, map drawing, question and answer exercises fill in the blank exercises and conversation practice. The teacher is the authority in the classroom. The students do as the teacher says so they can learn what the teacher knows. Larsen- Freeman (2000) stresses that when teaching dictation, the teacher reads the passage three times. At first the teacher reads it at a normal speed while the students listening.

The second time the teacher reads the passage phrase by phrase, pausing along enough to allow students to write down what they have heard. The last time the teacher reads again at a normal speed, and students check their work. The teacher identifies learners who cannot read and write at a normal speed as learners write down what they heard. Larsen- Freeman (2000) argues that when using the direct strategy, students are taught to recognize cognates by learning spelling or sounds patterns that correspond between the languages. Students are also asked to memorize words that look like cognates but have meanings in the target language that are different from those in the native language.

As mentioned earlier, the direct teaching strategy encourages learners to memorize and as a result, they end up not understanding what they are learning about. Learners fail to read and write because the teacher does most of the work while the learner passively sits in class waiting to receive information from the teacher. In order for learners to be able to read and write, they should be given more time to work independently and to interact with others learners.

### **2.6.3 India**

Like other country, India uses demonstration, choral and questioning to support learners with reading difficulties. Tatkovic (2020) stresses that demonstration included the use of real objects, performing actions, using gestures, and facial expression while Ahmad (2015) confirms that teachers need to use the visual materials and technology to equip learners with reading skills. It is good to ask learners questions at the beginning of the lesson, during teaching and learning and at the end of the lesson to test their prior-knowledge, understanding of what they have learned and encourage maximum participation (Larsen-Freeman 2002 as cited in Lumadi, 2016).

### **2.6.4 Zimbabwe**

In Zimbabwe, teachers use various strategies to support learners with reading difficulties namely: the direct-teaching strategy and learner-centred strategy. During direct -teaching strategy, learners followed instruction given by the teacher. They do what they are expected to do. Jaen and Basanta (2009, as cited in Lumadi, 2016) argue that the direct instructional method entails demonstrating teaching, competency-based instruction, presentation, explicit instruction, deductive or didactic teaching and teacher-direct instruction. Learner's centred strategy encourages the learners' progress on how they understand (Jacob, Vakalisa & Gawe, 2011, in Lumadi 2016).

### **2.6.5 Zambia**

Like any other country, Zambia prioritizes support for learners with reading difficulties in the education system. Zambia is one of the countries that followed the three model of reading such as bottom-up, top-down and interactive approach. The findings showed that several practices are as the follows: lessons characterized by phonics instruction and some emphasis on phonemic awareness. The teachers also use several strategies to support the learners such as direct group teaching, dividing learners into ability groups, use of question-and-answer technique, one-on-one

teaching and scaffolding of learners, paired and group reading, chorus reading and repetition, role sharing and presentation of tasks, love and care and achievement of the stated learning outcome (Chuunga,2013).

#### **2.6.4 South Africa**

In South Africa, the notion of support for learners with reading difficulties has been similarly given the highest priority in education system. The study conducted by Mphahlele (2018) reveals that teachers do not use ICTs; they rather use rubric, language experience approach, guided reading, and an integrated reading approach. Additionally, it revealed that teachers use wide range of methods such as curriculum adaptation, paired reading, peer reading, group reading, incidental reading, and auditory programme, the use of visual aids such as televisions, videos, cell phone, and audio-recorder.

The study conducted by Estelle (2020) reveals that teachers did not apply early identification strategies to support learners with reading difficulties. The SIAS policy is not implemented because the School Based Support Team (SBST) was under-utilized, and not followed the process and the procedures for referral. It was found that the SBST were consulted to refer a learner for a psychoeducational assessment. The study concluded that they did not have enough corrective measures such as curriculum differentiation or curriculum adaptation strategies in place and limited response strategies for intervention to support learners with reading difficulties. As a result, they could not successfully apply sufficient remedial strategies.

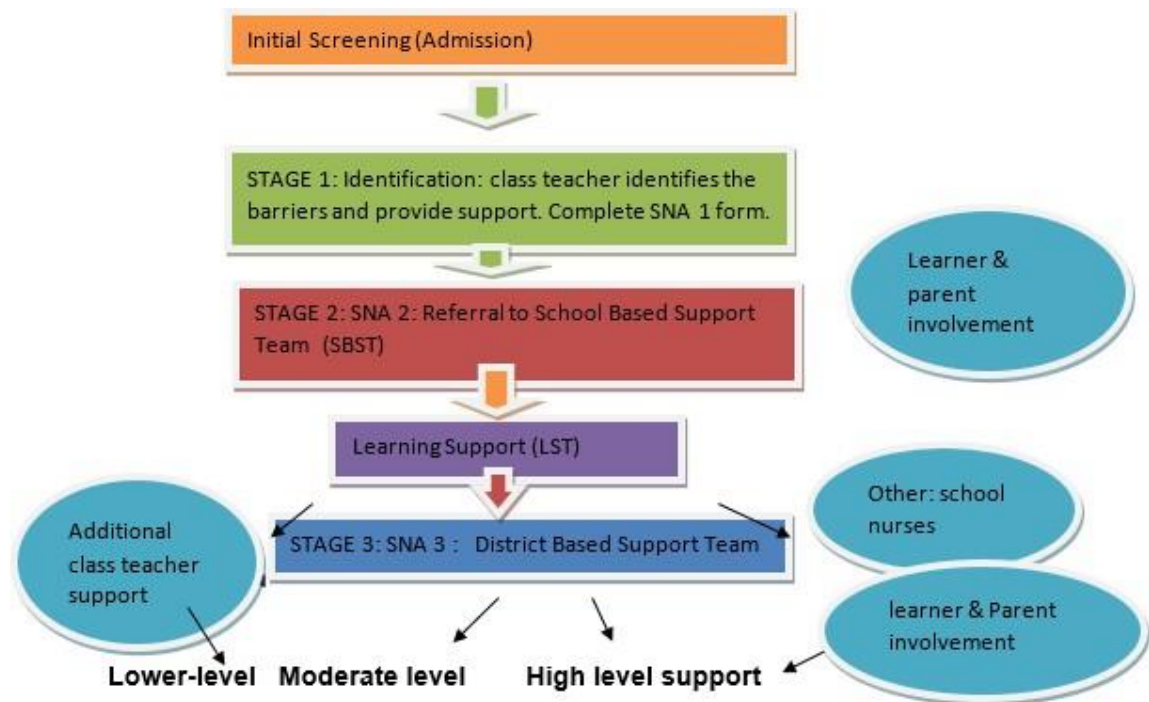
This resonates with PIRLS (2016) report that educators have limited understanding of how to support learners with reading difficulties because they do not have sufficient skills. The findings also showed lack of parental support and environmental factor are the concern in the South African schools. While the NEEDU report of 2018 (DBE, 2018), indicates that most teacher development activities are scheduled during the school hours when teachers are expected to deliver the lessons, an infringement on contact time with learners is not followed (DBE, 2018). It also indicates that teachers are overloaded with the curriculum delivery expectations and do not have more time to attend developmental workshops even though it is appreciated (Castillo

& Wagner, 2019). The findings also indicated that teachers have developed a motion of no confidence in the DBE because they do not equip them with tools to effectively support learners with reading difficulties.

## **2.7 POLICY SUPPORT PROCESSES IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS**

The SIAS policy was introduced in 2014 by the DBE and its purpose is to provide a policy framework for the normalization of the processes to screen, identify, assess, and provide intervention for all learners who require additional support to enhance their participation and inclusion in schools (DBE 2014(a)). The SIAS policy enables schools to respond to the learners' needs particularly those that are likely to be marginalized and excluded and vulnerable. But from the study conducted by Estelle (2020), it was showed that SIAS policy is not implemented because SBST was under-utilized

It is found that the SBST was consulted to refer a learner for a psychoeducational assessment.



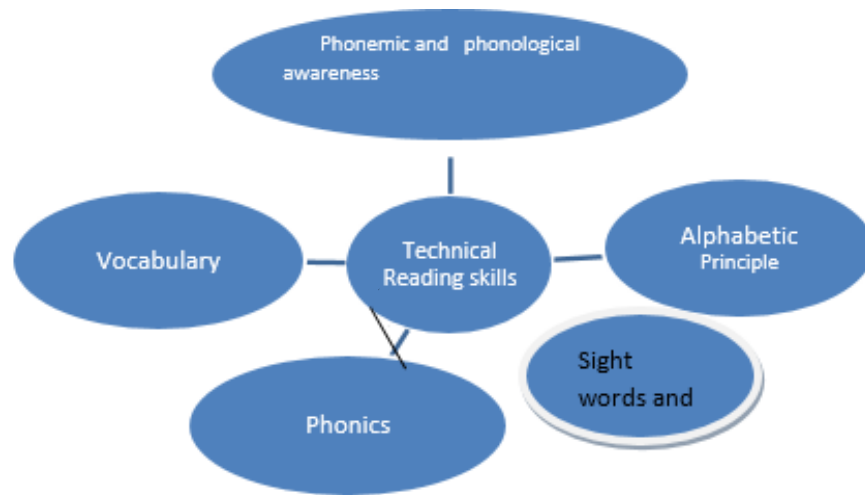
**Figure 2.3: SIAS Process: Source: SIAS: DBE (2014: 27-28)**

The above-mentioned process is obtained from the initial screenings to guide the class teacher as whether the learner is in danger of encountering learning barriers or not. If the learner is identified as at risk during the initial screening, the class teachers should design an individual support plan for the learner. Before the teacher can start with the support process, the learner's parents or caregivers should be invited to discuss the initial screening results and teacher's plan of action (Aziz et al., 2016; DBE, 2014). The parents should also assist the teacher to complete the Support Needs Assessment form 1 (SNA1).

If the learner is not progressing from the support received from the teacher, the learner should be transferred to SBST. The SBST should also give the learner the support needed, if the learner is not progressing, the SBST should complete SNA 2 for district reference. The class teacher should be invited to the meeting to present the learner's barrier to the team to come up with a plan of action. The team will look at all intervention the class teacher has used and suggest other strategies that the class teacher can use in class with the learner. The team should also involve the

LST. The LST should also provide support to the learner according to their timetable (DBE 2014) using the various technical reading skills outlined next.

## 2.8 TECHNICAL READING SKILLS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS



**Figure 2.4: Technical Reading Skills: Source: Assessment Framework: (DBE 2019, Scalon et al, and 2017:19)**

### 2.8.1 Phonemic and phonological awareness

Phonemic awareness refers to the learners' ability to hear and identify and manipulate the sounds (DBE 2019). It is the skills that do not involve any reading. It is developed through hearing and speech. Parents and teachers must be educated to play simple phonemic awareness games with learners. According to Pretorius, et al. (2016; Nel et al (2016), phonological and phonemic awareness refers to the ability to hear sounds within words and being able to manipulate them, it also includes the ability to hear which sounds occur at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of words and the ability to blend sounds within words.

According to Scalon et al. (2017), the child will have a conceptual grasp of the fact that words are made up of what separable sound segments. Moreover, the child will be able to say individual sounds in words spoken by the teacher and blend

sounds to form whole words. It can be developed through the use of poems and songs, clapping a rhythm which the learner listens to and repeats, listening to two sounds with eyes closed and saying whether they are the same or different, placing many objects on a table and telling the learner to pick up something that begins with a particular sound, identifying the beginning, middle and end sounds and playing games to break words up into syllables.

### **2.8.2 Alphabetic principle**

According to Pretorius et al. (2016), alphabetic principle refers to knowledge about letter-sound relationships. Knowing the letter of the alphabet, what sound each letter or letter combination presents. Learners should learn that different sounds are represented by letters of alphabet and that when we write we use those letters. The learners will understand that the letters in printed words represent the sounds in spoken words and will understand how to use the beginning and the ending letters in words attempt to read and spell words (Scalon, et al., 2017). In other words, learners must know that letters and words carry meaning. They must be taught to recognize the lower case and the upper-case letters. Learners usually start by recognizing the first letters of their names and learning to write their names. Learners will also learn to read common signs like the words Kentucky, Nandos, Coca Cola or Checkers.

### **Vocabulary**

To develop as readers, learners need to have knowledge and understanding of variety of words. It is necessary to use Point, Act, Tell, Say (PATs) method to teach vocabulary. This means the teacher should **Point** to a picture or real item to the learners. The teacher should **Act** out the theme word and **Tell** learners what the theme word means and say the word in a sentence and have the learner repeat the word after her (DBE, 2020). This PATs method is supported by Mohammadein (2016) when he confirms that some learners found it difficult to identify even a letter especially for those who have mild intellectual disability as teaching them is more complicated than teaching it to normal learners. Therefore, it is important to code-switch, where the teacher gives the meaning of the word in their home language.

Again, say the word in a sentence and allow learners to repeat the word after you (Primary Schools Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP, DBE, 2018). Knowing many words will help the learners with fluency as well as the comprehension of text. Some vocabulary can be learned incidentally from the text that the learner is reading, but there is also a need to teach vocabulary in a planned, deliberate way (DoE, 2008). The DBE (2019) and Scalon et al. (2017) confirm that learner's spoken vocabulary is a very good indicator of his or her future reading ability. It means if the learner knows more words it is easy to read fluently (Beck, 2007, as cited in Nel et al. 2016).

## Phonics

Phonics are the relationship between the sounds and the letters. The learners are taught to make use of the alphabetic system to decode (Mercer & Pullen 2006). The DoE (2008) confirms that phonics means decoding a word by breaking it into syllables and letters. It also states that phonics instruction teaches learners the relationship between the letters of written language and individual sounds of spoken language. Phonics are the building blocks of reading, meaning if the learners learn phonics, they will be able to learn the code of reading. It is the responsibility of teachers to teach learners all the sounds that are made by letters. Learners must be taught to blend and segment sounds to read and write.

For example, in English we do segmenting like this: say word **ship**= /sh/-i/-p/; **shut**=/sh/-u/-t/ but in Sepedi Home language we start with: /b/a/=ba; /ba//na/=bana. When doing these activities, the teacher does activity alone (I do), the teacher do activity together with the learners (We do); again, the learners do activity on their own (You do). Learners must be able to say all the individual sound in a word and blend them together until they can hear the word. Teachers should know phonics of English and home language, and they must know that sometimes letters make different sounds in different languages. Some letters that make different sounds in African languages and English are **a; u; ph; c; q; r; x**. (DBE 2019).

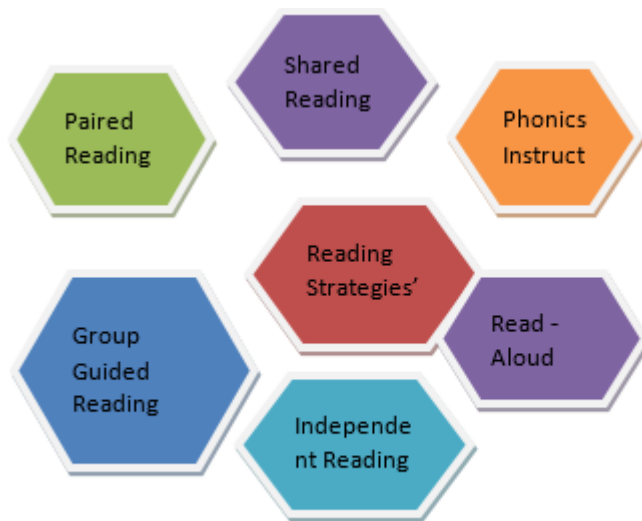


### **2.8.3 Sight words and High frequency words**

It is important to teach learners to recognize many words by sight because the more words that learners can read automatically or by sight, the faster and more fluent they will read. In English, we start by teaching learners sight words. These are words that are usually not phonetically regular and cannot sound out like the; your, them. We also use the term sight words to describe high frequency words. High frequency words are words that appear in almost every text. If the teacher teaches the learners to read these words with automaticity, they will improve their reading fluency and speed (DBE, 2019).

## **2.9 STRATEGIES THAT TEACHERS USE TO SUPPORT LEARNERS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

The DoE offers a more simplified explanation of what? Write it in full because it is the beginning of a paragraph), stating that reading strategies are ways of solving problems that the learners may come across while reading (DoE 2008). Even though the reading strategies explained below are intended for all learners to improve their reading skills, the researcher is of the opinion that they are also applicable when supporting learners who experience reading difficulties. However, the teacher needs to adapt and use a specific strategy to suit the specific needs of specific learners with a particular reading difficulty.



**Figure 2.5: Reading strategies Source: National framework: DBE (2019:104)**

### **2.9.1 Shared Reading**

Shared reading is a whole classroom instructional strategy where the teacher involves all the learners during the reading process including those with reading difficulties. As a result, the interaction between the learners and the teacher at this stage is essential. The teacher reads the text to and with the learners. In class, shared reading usually happens during the first 15 minutes of the reading and writing time two to four days in a week (DoE 2011). Place (2016) argues that the importance of using this reading instructional strategy is to show the learners “how to”. Similarly, the DoE (2008) shares the same view and maintains that, during shared reading, learners are taught how to read the text by considering the expression and intonation suited to the text and how to respond to the text.

In addition, Nel and Nel (2016) also argue that, during shared reading, learners are taught strategies to decode words and solve reading problems, allowing them to take risks during the reading process while being guaranteed support from the teachers and their peers. The teacher uses different texts such as big books, posters, pictures, and learners’ own writing or enlarged text from stories. More importantly, the text should be clear and big enough for all learners to see what is being read. During the first reading lesson, the focus should be on reading for enjoyment, where both the teacher and the learners first “look” at the text and the learners provide their individual meanings about the text. In the second reading lesson, the teachers use the same text but the focus shifts from meaning of the whole to the parts for instruction (Nel & Nel, 2016). At this stage, the emphasis is on making learners more involved. The teachers use discussions to enhance the learners’ vocabulary, decoding skills, comprehension, and text structure such as grammar and punctuation. In the third and fourth reading lesson, learners read the text themselves and are engaged in practical, written and oral activities based on the text. Through shared reading, the learners’ confidence in reading escalates and their sight words and vocabularies are extended.

### **2.9.2 Group Guided Reading**

Group guided reading is a strategy used with ability-group learners working with texts at their instructional level (Place 2016; DoE 2011). It is a teacher-centred instructional activity where the teacher is responsible to group the learners according to their reading abilities and interests and to select a suitable graded reading book for the learners based on their instructional level. Nel and Nel (2016) assert that each group may consist of four to six learners with similar instructional needs using one instructional text, for example, shared reading and each group session might last ten to 15 minutes (DoE 2011; Place 2016). During group guided reading, each group works with a different text to read under the teacher's supervision. Even though the learners at that stage will belong to a certain group, it should be noted that these groups are not permanent as they may change based on the teachers' observations and progress of the learners after the assessment.

This strategy has benefits for both the teacher and learners. It provides learners with an opportunity to integrate their developing knowledge of the conventions of print, letter-sound relationship and other foundational skills in context and, on the other hand, it provides the teacher with an opportunity to observe the reading behaviours and to identify areas of need for learners (DoE, 2008).

### **2.9.3 Independent Reading**

For learners who require individual attention such as the remedial readers, independent reading or individual reading is the most suitable strategy. When supporting these learners, the teacher will allow each learner to choose his or her own reading book based on his or her interest and ability (DoE 2008; Nel & Nel 2016). This strategy allows learners to take responsibility for their own learning. During the reading process, the learners will read books for enjoyment to practice and boost their individual reading ability. Then, after the learners are done with their reading, the teacher will have a discussion with each learner based on what he or she has read.

#### **2.9.4 Paired Reading**

Paired reading is another strategy that the teacher may use to support the learners who experience reading problems. But this will depend on the number of learners in need of support in the classroom. Paired reading allows the teacher to read to the learner and the latter following the text. It also allows the teacher to group the learners in pairs where learners will be reading for enjoyment. When two learners are grouped together, one learner will read while the other one will be listening. The grouped learners will be allowed to read either inside or outside the classroom to practice their reading and gain confidence (DBE 2011).

#### **2.9.5 Reading Aloud**

According to the DoE (2008), reading aloud permits the teacher to read the text to the whole class or to a group of learners using the reading text that is related to the learners' reading level. By so doing, learners can hear models of fluent reading (Nel & Nel 2016). Teachers use this strategy to expose the learners to different texts and to increase their vocabulary and language skill, develop their love for and motivation to learn to read. In support of this statement, Rose and Smith (2012) argue that reading aloud is the most effective strategy in the development of the learners' vocabulary and language skill when they are actively involved in the reading process rather than when they are passive listeners. Considering the foregoing, it is important for the teachers to ask learners questions during the reading lesson. This is done to prompt discussion and to allow learners to forecast what the text will be all about. Since reading aloud models fluency, increases vocabulary and develops the love of reading to the learners, it is important for the teacher to have knowledge and understanding of this reading strategy to support learners with reading difficulties. Therefore, the next section discusses the methods that can enhance support for learners with reading difficulties.

### **2.10 ENHANCING SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES**

The support needs to be enhanced to motivate and inspire the learners to read. It will instill the love of reading for enjoyment and for fun. It also assists learners who come from disadvantaged families, illiterate families and learners who lack support from their home. Therefore, it is important for the teachers to be empowered with the following methods to enhance support for learners with reading difficulties.

### **2.10.1 Teacher training on adapted resources**

This refers to the training teachers should receive regarding the teaching of reading (the reading components and methodologies) in the Foundation Phase. Effective teacher training programmes and ongoing support from all stakeholders will impact on reading outcomes in the early grades (DBE 2019). Mbatha (2018) indicates that teachers should be trained to use the integrating curriculum into three-dimensional and two-dimensional learning styles, to use concrete objects to reinforce learning styles, emphasizing the importance of using concrete objects to reinforce learning in teaching reading through an integrated balanced approach, but not in isolation. It is the ability to manipulate and break sounds or phonemes in a word using visual over verbal.

### **2.10.2 Parental and community involvement**

According to Mbatha (2018), parental involvement should demonstrate certain common themes and operative trust models that should lead to a variety of participation from difficult activities based to school. Similarly, Naidoo et al (2014) indicate that parents need to play an active role in education by monitoring homework, engaged in adult literacy courses, liaising with teachers to discuss learners' progress and act as volunteers at schools. Parents and the local community are important role-players who can offer support to promote a reading culture in schools by attending school reading events, volunteering to help as library assistants, and by participating in reading clubs and telling stories. Additionally, parents and community can be involved by asking children what they have learned at school, checking homework, and asking children to read to them (DBE, 2019).

### **2.10.3 Provision of reading resources**

Reading resources are material that can assist learners during learning and teaching from Grades R to 3. It includes Big Books, graded readers, storybooks, phonics programmes, conversation posters and DBE Workbooks. Teachers will be able to use a variety of reading resources to teach reading in accordance with the reading methodologies prescribed in CAPS. They should be able to select appropriate reading materials: Texts that are interesting and motivating for individual learners (boys and girls, different developmental stages) include high quality children's literature, non-fiction texts in home and additional languages (DBE (2019).

### **2.10.4 Developing children's motivation and Reading habits**

According to the NFR, DBE, (2019), this means providing opportunities for children to choose, handle and engage freely with books and other texts in class and at school during reading sessions such as library periods and Drop All and Read time. Children must have frequent, regular and extended opportunities to handle and engage with texts; experience reading for enjoyment; take books and other reading resources home to read in their own time.

### **2.10.5 Setting up of print-rich classrooms**

A print-rich classroom has displays of theme posters, phonics charts, vocabulary charts, wordlists, word-walls, learners' writing, and a classroom library or Reading Corner. A print-rich classroom exposes children to printed texts (letters, words, captions, sentences), which will enable them to read freely on their own. It will also give them exposure to various kinds of printed texts which will help them to widen their interests and knowledge, as well as expand their literacy skills (DBE 2019).

### **2.10.6 Setting up of reading corners**

A reading corner is a dedicated space in the classroom where teachers display storybooks, picture cards, reading cards, and children's comics. If there is space, there can be a mat where a few learners can sit and read. The reading corner is a welcoming space where children can pick up any book that suits their interest and read freely, independently and in pairs (DBE 2019).

### **2.10.7 Provisioning of reading coaches**

A reading coach is a professional literacy trainer and mentor who offers classroom-based support to teachers regarding the teaching of reading. Literacy trainers help teachers to improve instruction by implementing new teaching strategies. The role of the reading coach is to support teachers in delivering effective reading lessons DBE (2019). Additionally, school management teams (SMTs) can also assist by ensuring that learners are taught at entry level in the mother tongue, make reading resources available, diagnose reading difficulty of learners, work together with the DBE to find solutions for learners with reading difficulties, use retired teachers for remedial teaching and monitor teachers' lessons on reading regularly (Naidoo et al. 2014).

### **2.10.8 Accessibility to ICT and libraries**

Information Communication Technology (ICT) resources include smartboards, books on tablets and laptops. Libraries: this includes access to a classroom library, trolley library, mobile library, the school library, or a public library. Experience with ICT resources will expose learners to reading printed texts through electronic media. Access to libraries will encourage children to read independently in the classroom, school and home (DBE 2019). It is supported by Gear (2006, as cited in Rama& Rahim 2018) when asserting that an interesting and fun learning can be created through interesting materials integrated with the internet.

Young learners who experience reading difficulties in reading comprehension may use the internet to widen their opportunities to infer, connect, predict, and ask questions. One of internet devices that can be employed to enhance the support for learners with reading difficulties is Schoology. Schoology is a web-based K-12 learning environment that will give learners, parents and teachers access to class materials and information via the internet (Farmington Schoology, 2014 cited in Rama & Rahim 2018). The use of ICT also supported by the study conducted by Mphahlele and Nel ( 2018) that confirms ICT as fast and becoming a key instrument in addressing reading difficulties such as poor phonics skills, poor comprehension, spelling, and slow processing of words.



### **2.10.9 Implementation of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)**

The EGRA, DBE, (2014) is a diagnostic reading assessment that is used to assess the learners' reading proficiency in different areas, for example letter sound recognition, word reading, passage reading, and comprehension. EGRA is effective in identifying learners who are not at Grade level especially those with poor phonological awareness in Grades R and 1, poor letter-sound knowledge in Grade 1, and poor oral reading fluency, phonics, decoding, and comprehension in Grades 2 and 3 (DBE, 2014). Additionally, it can serve as a baseline of early reading acquisition; it can guide the content that included in an instructional programme and can evaluate programmes (Dubeck & Gove 2015, Mphahlele, & Nel, 2018, Cuning, 2013; Rasinski, 2010).

### **2.10.10 Implementation of Reading Norms and Standards**

Reading norms and standards are benchmarks for the teacher and the learner. Reading norms and standards enable and assist teachers to compare their learners' performance against an evidence-based standard of performance; evaluate the impact of their teaching; set goals for achievement so that learners reach the required benchmarks by the end of the grade; and identify learners who have fallen far behind (DBE 2019).

### **2.10.11 Peer-assisted learning strategy (PALS)**

It is a research-based instructional programme with evidence of effectiveness for classroom used by teachers. The main purpose of PALS is to support the learning of all learners through peer or classmate support. In PALS, higher performing readers can pair with lower performing readers to practice critical reading skills. It focuses on fluency and comprehension skills and include four main components: learners reading to each other aloud retell to each other, summarizing a story to a peer, and making predictions about what will happen next in the story (Ticha, Aberly, Johnstone, Poghosyn & Hunt 2018).

### **2.10.12 Cooperative learning strategy**

According to Ticha et al. (2018), this strategy was designed to be implemented with an entire classroom of diverse learners across curriculum. During cooperative learning, learners are organized and work together in small mixed ability groups.

Learners received instructions from the teacher and work together on one activity until the group member successfully understands and completes it. Learners benefit from each other skills and knowledge, and they are working towards the same goal.

#### **2.10.13 Direct instruction**

Direction instruction refers to any academic instructions led by the teacher. It used to teach basic skills in reading and writing. It is useful to teach basic literacy skills or to combine sentences. It also enhances oral, spelling and comprehension skills. The last strategy is play-based strategies which based on oral language that learned spontaneously in childhood by imitation. Play can help to overcome difficulties by learners who experienced difficulties in reading and writing. It used in all ages and needs. These strategies designed to blend letters into words. At the end, it helps the learners to count the number of syllables to form a word (Ticha et al. 2018).

The foregoing study revealed that learners' reading becomes more effective if the following methods can be established and accessible to learners such as teacher training, parental and community involvement, provision of reading resources, motivation and reading habits, print-rich classroom, reading coach, ICT and library, EGRA, cooperative learning strategies, and peer-assisted learning.

### **2.11 A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES**

#### **Vygotsky's theory**

According to Davies (2017), the way learners learn and mentally grow plays a central role in their learning process and abilities. There is some evidence to suggest that several concepts arising from Vygotsky's theory of social learning are important to classroom learning.

For this study, the researcher focused on two concepts, the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding. The ZPD is defined as the range of tasks that a learner can perform with collaboration, direction or some kind of help, to do more

and solve more difficult task independently

(Vygotsky, 1987, cited in Mphahlele and Nel, 2018). Vygotsky regards learning as a frequent process from present mental level to a high level that around the learners' potential.

The ZPD is the gap between the actual growth level as controlled by an individual difficulty and the level of the potential as controlled by solving problem under the supervision of parents and groups (Amineh& Davagari, 2015). This theory stresses that a child can become competent and sharing common goals when scaffolding, supervision, help, guidance, support, and cooperative learning in small groups created, such as learning how to read (Gordon,2014).

Scaffolding is defined as a key feature of effective teaching and can include modelling skills and adapting material or activities. Based on the definitions it is evident that scaffolding is directly related to ZPD in that it is the support strategy that helps a learner to successfully perform a task within his or her ZPD. As a result, scaffolding in this study included how teachers modelled reading skills to the learners and how teachers adapted the reading material or activities to cater for all learners in the Foundation Phase.

Vygotsky further highlights that the child is embedded in the family and culture of his community. Children learn through guided participation with others. Vygotsky places emphasis on a social learner interaction between a teacher and a learner whereby both impart skills and cultural values of that skill, as well as teaching how to build relationship and use language (Gordon, 2014). For example the teachers encourage the learners to do checkout at the library and take home. It is supported by the DBE (2019) when indicating that parents and the local community are important role players to support and promote a reading culture in schools by attending reading programmes and helping learners to read at home. Therefore, the

researcher used the literature review to provide how the learners are scaffolded by knowledgeable person, which is the teacher in this case.

Scaffolding is the process in Vygotsky's theory whereby a more knowledgeable person changes the degree and quality of support provided to the less skilled learner as he or she becomes more proficient. Therefore, a teacher serves as a more knowledgeable person in instruction (Farr, 2015). When teachers allowed learners to read sounds, syllables, words and one or two sentences, using pictures and flash cards, they are trying to support, assist and guide learners with reading difficulties. Therefore, Vygotsky proposed ZPD and the idea of scaffolding in learner's development; he recognized that there are some learners who cannot read independently especially how to read. But they would be able to do so with the assistance of expert person. Vygotsky's theory was used as a lens that guided the analysis and findings of the study.

## **2.12 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter focused on the relevant literature related to support for learners with reading difficulties. The chapter focused on reading in Foundation Phase, stages of reading, levels of reading, the concept reading difficulties, causes of reading difficulties and their manifestation. Furthermore, the Chapter outlined the strategies and methods used to support the learners, methods to enhance reading. The Chapter also outlined support for reading internationally, nationally and in South Africa. The SIAS process as the policy introduced to support learners with reading difficulties has been discussed in this chapter. The chapter concludes by presenting Vygostky's theory as the lens that guided the study. The next chapter presents the research methodology, data collection, data analysis and ethical consideration followed in this study.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes the research methodology of this study. In particular, the chapter describes the research methods, the research approach, and the methods of data collection, the selection of the sample, validity and reliability, the research process, the type of data analysis, the ethical considerations and finally, the limitations of the study.

### **3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH**

Research approaches are plans and the procedures for research. To guide the study, a qualitative research approach was used. Creswell (2014) defines qualitative approach as a method which is used to understand the key features or aspects in a specific organizational structure or events from the participants' perspectives through narrative descriptions and data collection. The approach allows the researcher to design a deeper and richer picture of what is going on in a particular setting. De Franzo (2011) posits that qualitative research accesses experiences and the concepts under study are refined as the research is conducted.

This flexible and inductive approach was suitable for the study owing to its focus on individual experience and meaning. Creswell (2014) also establishes that human and social problems are attached with meaning through qualitative research. Hence the choice of the approach was based on the purpose of finding meaning from teachers who support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. This approach is naturalistic and involves data collection in the participant's setting (Niewenhuis, 2017). In this study, the researcher went to the participant's natural settings which are their schools to collect the data. The next section outlines the research design for this study.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Yin (2011; 2018) describes research design as an action plan for answering the research question under study and coordinating all the major parts of the study to address the research questions. Lichtman (2014) asserts that a research design assists researchers in planning their research, defining a set of steps or procedures that they should follow in conducting research and assists in grounding their research in a conceptual or theoretical model. It also assists the researcher to decide how the research will be presented. There are five types of research design in qualitative approach, namely, ethnography, grounded, phenomenology, case study and narrative research (Creswell, 2016). Following the aim of this study, a phenomenological design was adopted, and its appropriateness is discussed in the ensuing paragraph.

#### **3.3.1 Phenomenological research design**

Nieuwenhuis (2016) asserts that phenomenological studies focus on the meaning that existing experiences hold for participants. Creswell (1998) asserts that a phenomenological study describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or a phenomenon. Phenomenological enquiry requires that researchers to reduce any personal biases by bracketing their personal judgement (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Tufford and Newman (2010) explain bracketing as a method used to minimise the potential influence of the effect of preconceptions that may influence the research process. However, Lichtman (2014) and Heidegger (in Lichtman 2014) hold the assumption that bracketing is not possible, as variables like background, gender and culture play an influential role in the process of data interpretation. Nieuwenhuis (2016) proposes the concept of 'authentic reflection' rather than bracketing which permits researchers to acknowledge their own assumptions about a phenomenon being studied. It is on this basis that phenomenology was adopted to fully understand the deep structures that



drive the conscious thinking, feeling, attitude and behaviour of the participants; findings are presented in Chapter 4.

### **3.4 POPULATION**

Population refers to a group of people to be used to get a sample in research (Liamputtong, 2013). It is the sum of group to which results of the study can be generalized. Therefore, the research population targeted for this research study was heterogeneous, comprising both female and male Foundation Phase teachers. The determinants of the target population included accessibility of the subjects, as well as their knowledge and experience regarding the topic under study. The target population was operational in Magakala Cluster where the study was conducted. The latter comprised of five circuits being Driekop (16 primary schools), Leolo (16 primary Schools), Malokela (18 primary schools), Moroke (16 primary schools) and Dilokong (18 primary schools). The higher number of primary schools in the cluster played a major role in the selection of the site, as the researcher was spoiled for choice in terms of replacements of participants if required. As per the definition of population above, it can be seen that participants needed to be sampled for feasibility purposes.

### **3.5 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

Considering the depth to which the researcher would like to explore the phenomenon being studied, a non-probability strategy of purposive sampling was deployed. Non-probability sampling has the implication that not all members of the population have an equal chance of participating in the study. Conversely, in probability sampling, each member of the population has a known chance of being selected. Non-probability is a more conducive and practical method, faster and more

effective and it is based on the subject judgment of the researcher for deploying survey in the real world (McMillan et al 2014; Creswell et al., 2018,).

Therefore, based on the infeasibility of involving all members of the target population, purposive sampling has been adopted to select participants with better attributes required for the study. Purposive sampling can be defined as an approach whereby participants are chosen based on the information they have or can give (Creswell et al. 2010; Creswell & Creswell 2018). In the same vein, Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtler (2010) stress that purposive sampling permits the researcher to choose participants who have important information in relation to the purpose of the study. Not all members of the population could be included in the study. Therefore, the researcher had to select a small segment (sample) of the total population.

### **3.5.1 Sample**

Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe, and Young (2018) define a sample as a selection of participants with the capacity to provide relevant information to the phenomenon under investigation. The sample was composed of experienced and professionally qualified foundation teachers. The sample was informed by the belief (based on experience) that they possess rich and in-depth data required for the study. Accordingly, the sample was purposively selected from public primary schools that fall under quintile 1 and qualify for state funding through Norms and Standard for School Funding as stated in section 34 of South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. The criteria for selecting the sample were as follows:

- They had to be currently teaching in the Foundation Phase teachers(grade 1 to 3);
- They are in possession of professional qualification;
- They are permanently employed;
- Have at least ten years of experience; and
- Being at the age range of 40 to 50 years.

### **3.5.2 Sample size**

Sample size refers to the number of participants included in a study (Creswell et al. 2018). Yin (2014) avers that sample size in qualitative research is yet to be agreed upon. Fusch and Ness (2015) posit that saturation should be the guiding principle in determining the number of samples. Saturation entails a point of redundancy, where no new information could be established. In line with this argument, one school in

each of the five circuits in the cluster was purposively sampled. Considering the nature of qualitative studies, and a need for smaller samples, fifteen (15) Foundation Phase teachers from five selected schools were listed for this study. The participants selected were three Foundation Phase teachers from each school. As a result the participants were 15 teachers of Grade 1 to Grade 3. The sample, being representative of the target population, was believed to possess rich information required for the study (participants details are presented in Chapter 4).

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION**

Data collection refers to the process through which answers to the research problem are gathered, the research questions answered and the outcome from the participants evaluated (Dudovskiy, 2018). According to Kumar (2019), there are two major approaches to gather information about a research problem; data are categorized into two groups of primary data sources and secondary data sources. During the research study, information is either collected or extracted from the available sources which demarcate these two categories.

To gather rich data of Foundation Phase teachers, the study utilized both secondary and primary sources. Data from primary sources were collected through interviews. Interviews gather information on person's knowledge, values, preferences, and attitudes (Cohen & Manion, 2000, in Gray, 2009). At times, interviews are used in conjunction with other research techniques to follow upon earlier on studies and shows relationships with recent studies. The researcher analyzed the available literature on support for learners with reading difficulties through analytical engagement with documents relevant to the research study. The scholarly work and document analysis shaped the study in terms of what is expected of these teachers during support for learners with reading difficulties.

### **3.6.1 Interviews**

Before each interview, the researcher explained to the interviewee the purpose of the study and the expectations as a participant in the study. Interviews have various definitions. Monette, Gullivan and DeJong (2010) define interviews as a process through which an interviewer reads out questions to the participants and in return records their responses. According to Burns, McBride, Patel and FitzGerald (2019), interviews involve a verbal interchange with the intent of eliciting information, opinions and beliefs from the interviewee. The study employed the semi-structured interviews in obtaining data from the research participants telephonically which is confirmed by Creswell (2014). The researcher engaged with the Foundation Phase teachers with room allotted for reflection on how they understand support for learners with reading difficulties, strategies and methods used, the strength and weakness of the strategies and the methods to enhance support and identification of learners with reading difficulties. Burns et al. (2019) posit that interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have been implicit to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to probe for more detailed and clarified responses (Gray, 2009) from participants. Furthermore, Gray (2009) asserts that the researcher in qualitative studies is positioned to decide on the format and content of the questions to be asked to the interviewee. In studying the Foundation Phase teachers, the research chose open-ended questions as the researcher could shift the order of questions and insert additional questions as issues emerged (Gray, 2009). The interviews were scheduled to take up to 60 minutes depending on the issues arising from the discussions. However, for validity purposes, the researcher ensured each question adhered to the research objectives. The researcher encouraged Foundation Phase teachers to illustrate and expand on their initial responses while making sure to sufficiently understand issues that were being raised.

### **3.6.2 Piloting of the interview schedule**

#### **3.6.2.1 *Determination of Interview Questions***

Before the actual research study, it is important for the researcher to pilot her study to familiarize herself with the research questions and to verify whether the participants would have rich data to answer the research questions. The intention of the pilot was to discover potential problems in understanding the way questions have been worded, the appropriateness of the meaning it communicates, whether different respondents interpret a question differently and to establish whether their interpretation is different to what the researcher intends to convey (Kumar, 2019). After the piloting procedure, according to responses, the researcher addressed the challenges to obtain the right information during the actual data collection.

#### **3.6.2.2 *Review of interview questions***

The interview schedule was reviewed based on research objectives and designed to ask interviewees questions starting with simple themes to complex ones. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2016) confirm that a pilot study signifies a stage of the study wherein the researcher collects a small amount of data to (1) verify the research procedures; (2) identify possible problems in the data collection protocols; and (3) set the stage for the actual study. In support of Teddlie and Tashakkori's views, De Vos et al. (2011) highlight that in qualitative research, a pilot study is generally conducted informally with a few participants having the same characteristics as those that will be participating in the main study.

They further indicate that a pilot study is simply conducted to determine certain trends. In this study, the researcher reviewed interview questions with one of the Foundation Phase teachers in Grade 2. The teacher was selected because she specialized with Foundation Phase and had knowledge and experience related to support for learners with reading difficulties. The researcher undertook this process in order to verify whether the research questions were clear and logical. The research questions were also shared and discussed with my supervisor. After review, the researcher found that some of the original questions were not correctly

formulated and needed to be rephrased. As a result, the researcher rephrased the questions and proceeded to selection of participants.

### **3.6.2.3    *Selection of participants***

Bertram and Christiansen (2016) and Barker (2003) argue that a pilot study forms the preliminary stage where the research tools are verified with a small group of participants who hold the same characteristics with the actual study participants. With that in mind, it can be indicated that a pilot study is used to verify the research tool(s) to be used before the study can be conducted. For this study, the researcher verified and selected one Foundation Phase teacher from the nearest schools and used the prepared semi-structured interview questions to interview and pilot the research instrument.

#### **3.6.2.4 Piloting the interviews**

The researcher piloted the interview questions with one of the Foundation Phase teachers (grade 1) from a neighbouring mainstream school. This teacher was selected because she had the knowledge and experience relating to how learners in Foundation Phase who experience reading difficulties are supported. The researcher undertook this process to verify whether the research questions were clear and whether they would yield results. Based on piloting the interview discussed, the researcher moved to recording of challenges and improved the instrument.

#### **3.6.2.5 Record challenges and improve**

Depending on the outcome of the pilot study, the researcher either changed or left the questions as they were. In this study, after the pilot study the researcher felt that some of the original questions were not formulated correctly and sounded confusing to the participant and hence, they were rephrased.

Original Questions	Final Questions
Question 4: What are the causes of reading difficulties?	Question4: During support what do you expect learners to have mastered in terms of reading?
Question 5: How do you identify learners with reading difficulties?	Question 5: What helps you to implement support for learners with Reading difficulties?
Question 1: How long have you been teaching Foundation Phase?	Question 2: Using your knowledge and experience how can you explain Foundation Phase learners regarding how they learn to read?

**Table: 3:1:** Final interview questions



Strydom and Delport (2019) highlight the following features of a pilot study: Reviewing the literature – this involves making decisions about the position and the function of a literature review in a study which is conducted qualitatively. To ensure this, the researcher reviewed a wealth of current literature pertaining to how Foundation Phase teachers support learners with reading difficulties.

### **3.6.3 Document analysis**

McMillian et al (2014) describe document analysis as a non-interactive strategy where the researcher obtains qualitative data from the participants with little or no conversation between them. Niewenhuis (2016) asserts that documents help in reconstructing events and critical incidences. Additionally, Niewenhuis (2016) highlights that documents analysis could be divided into two broad categories, namely, primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are the materials that are originally written from the author's own observations and experiences and be either published or unpublished. Secondary sources are materials that are taken from someone else as the original sources such as books, articles and reports that are based on someone's work or previously published work. In this study, the researcher analyzed the documents which included their lesson plans, work schedules, class timetable, the Curriculum Recovery Plan (2021) on how to assess reading activities during Corona-virus pandemic.

Documents were used to guide the teachers with methodology and strategies to support learners with reading difficulties, such as Curriculum and Assessment Policy statement (CAPS; DoE, (2014), which is a document to see when did teachers assess reading, what are they assess and duration for assessment per learner. The national framework for reading is a document that outlines CAPS document in strategies and methodology to teach reading in the Foundation Phase. Room to Read (2020) is a document used to see how teachers plan and teach lessons for Sepedi home language specially to support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase; National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT, 2014) and PSRIP (2020), which are documents used to see how teachers plan their reading lesson, methods and strategies used, class timetable, weekly routine, classroom

display board that teachers use to support learners with reading difficulties in Foundation Phase. Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA, 2014) is a document used to see how the teachers assess reading in the Foundation Phase and to see what assessment tool and reading materials used and graded reading books which are used to see which levels of books are used to support learners with reading difficulties.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative data analysis is a method of arranging data into categories, as well as classifying patterns and connections between the categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). A further definition is given by De Vos (2005) who defines data analysis as a technique used to structure, bring order and give meaning to data collected. In explaining the concept further, Miles and Huberman (1994 as cited in Bertram and Christiansen 2016) argue that data analysis consists of three interwoven flows of activities: Firstly, data reduction entails the procedure of focusing, selecting, simplifying, transforming and abstracting the data that emerges in transcriptions or written-up field notes; secondly, data display which is an organized, compressed assembly of the information that permits the researcher to draw conclusions and take action; and lastly, conclusion drawing and verification when the researcher starts to draw conclusions from data, noting patterns and possible explanations.

Creswell (2016) and Bertram and Christiansen (2016) argue that there are two broad approaches to qualitative data analysis, namely, an inductive approach and a deductive approach. In contrast to the deductive approach which operates from the more general to the more specific, an inductive approach operates from specific to broader generalizations and theories (Bertram & Christiansen 2016). In this study, the researcher followed an inductive approach when analyzing data. This means that the researcher used the raw data that were collected during the interviews to identify categories and themes. To structure the process of

gathering and analyzing data, the researcher adopted a process suggested by Creswell (2002 as cited in Leedy & Ormrod 2005), which sees data analysis as a spiral, moving from a narrow perspective to a broad one at the end.

Therefore, data collected on support for learners with reading difficulties were analyzed considering the research questions and the established framework of the study. Qualitative data analysis is the range of processes and procedures whereby the researcher moves from the qualitative data collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations under investigation (Yayli, 2005). The analysis examines the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data based on an interpretative philosophy (Babbie, 2007). The researcher attempted to identify how teachers support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase; how teachers understand support for learners with reading difficulties; which strategies do teachers use to support learners; and which methods can be used to enhance support. Research findings are interpreted through the data analysis process, an important phase of research (Seidman, 1998). The researcher started this process by listening to the voice of the participants' responses, reviewing notes kept in the field or gathered during the interviews and transcribe the data. The researcher reviewed the transcribed data several times so that she could immerse herself in the data. After the researcher transcribed the data many times, she followed the process as indicated on Section 3.3.

This study used content and thematic analysis methods of analyzing data from the semi-structured in-depth interviews with Foundation Phase teachers. Content analysis studies lived experiences, attitudes focusing on who said what, to whom, how and why (Babbie, 2007). Furthermore, phenomenological research uses the analysis of significant statements, the generation of meaning units and the development of what calls an essence description (Moustakas 1994, cited in Creswell, 2014).

This research study used inductive methods to analyze interview transcripts. The choice of the thematic and content analysis was to find common patterns across the data set: "In general, the intent was to make sense out of text and image data. It

involved segmenting and taking apart the data as well as putting it back together” (Creswell, 2014). The researcher adopted a process suggested by Creswell (2002 as cited in Leedy & Ormrod 2005) outlined below. Table 3.2 shows the sub-themes and themes that emerged from the data collected.

Sub-themes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach</li> <li>• Process</li> <li>• Remedial</li> <li>• Extra-class</li> <li>• Learner concession</li> </ul>	<b>Theme 1:</b> Understanding support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared reading</li> <li>• Group reading</li> <li>• Paired reading</li> <li>• Independent reading</li> <li>• Reading aloud</li> <li>• Technical and comprehension skills</li> </ul>	<b>Theme 3:</b> Teachers’ support strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Teamwork</li> <li>• Workshop</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• ICT</li> <li>• Parental involvement</li> <li>• Overcrowded</li> <li>• Conducive environment</li> </ul>	<b>Theme 3:</b> Methods to enhance support

**Table 3.2:** Themes that emerged from the data

The following phases were followed:

**PHASE 1: Transcribing of the interview, getting familiar with data:** Transcription is the action of providing a written account of spoken words. In qualitative research, transcription is conducted of individual or group interviews and generally written verbatim. Before transcription, the researcher organized and prepared data collected from the Foundation Phase teachers for analysis. The researcher then transcribed Foundation Phase teachers' interviews, scanning the materials, typing up of field notes, cataloguing of all visual material, sorting and arranging data from the biographical forms and semi-structured interviews and document analysis into different types (Creswell, 2014). Transcribed data were arranged into patterns of teacher support for learners with reading difficulties, strategies used, methods used to support learners, and methods to enhance support for learners with reading difficulties were identified and analyzed.

**PHASE 2: Coding:** The qualitative codes were obtained through content analysis. These codes relate to the emerging themes based on the research objectives and questions guiding the study (Creswell, 2014). Rossman and Rallis (2012) define coding as the process by which meanings are attached to text data, pictures gathered during data collection through labelling. In this study, the researcher got a sense of a whole by reading all transcriptions about support for learners with reading difficulties carefully. She jotted down all important ideas. When the researcher found the most descriptive topics, she turned them into categories. The researcher looked for a way to reduce the total list of categories.

**PHASE 3: Categorizing and organizing** data using clear language. When the researcher had finished, she made a list of all topics and cluster together under similar topics. After clustering together similar topic, the researcher took the list and abbreviated the topics as code and wrote next to the text. The main aim was to see if new categories and codes were beginning to emerge. A brainstorming process commenced where the codes were analyzed. In this process, codes were combined into themes, filtered, categorized, clustered, and organized into groups. Similar codes were sorted together into a predominant theme.

**PHASE 4: Generation of themes:** This is the phase where the researcher developed subthemes and themes in search of coherent patterns to finalize the themes of the study. Therefore, the researcher took a final decision on the abbreviation for each category. She put all the data material belonging to each category in one place and performed preliminary analysis. Through coding, themes for analysis were generated; these formed headings in the findings section of studies and were substantiated with scholarly literature and other relevant documents in the study. In terms of support for learners with reading difficulties, the analysis of the content concluded with their transition to the content (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

At this final step of data analysis, the researcher interpreted the findings based on personal interpretation and experiences and comparing the findings with information gathered from the literature. Creswell (2014) asserts that the researchers use a theoretical lens to form interpretations that call for action agendas for reform and change. It was during this phase where the themes were assigned to answer each research question and determine whether it achieved the aims of the study. At this phase, each theme was analyzed to understand how it responded to the research question. Data were gathered to verify each theme. A description of the data track will be further explained later in the study. Reading tool, rubric for reading, timetable, and weekly routine were used to questions and understand the data; this added to the validity and reliability of the findings.

### **3.8 RESEARCH TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Polit and Hungler (2016) explain that research trustworthiness establishes reliability and validity in qualitative research. Validity is the ability of an instrument to measure what it is designed to measure (Kumar, 2019). To ensure validity in this study, the researcher ensured a logical link between the questions and the objectives of the study. Reliability refers to the condition where the research instrument has a similar meaning through consistency, stability, predictability, and accuracy (Kumar, 2019). The validity to research findings is usually addressed

by credibility, authenticity, and trustworthiness: the accuracy of the data gathered is conformed from angles of the researcher, participant and the reader. To make sure this was conformed, the researcher engaged with the sample by sending the transcripts for confirmation to the participants that information was recorded rightly; room for additional information was given.

To attain trustworthiness in the research findings, the following measures were deployed:

- Triangulation, use of member checks, use of the rich thick description, clarification on the bias the researcher brings to the study;
- Presentation of the negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes;
- Prolonged time in the field, use of peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of the account;
- Use of an external language editor to review the entire project, check of transcripts to eliminate mistakes during transcription; and
- Check to avoid a drift of definition of codes and a shift in the meaning of the codes during the process of coding.

Collected data from the selected sources were triangulated. Support for learners with reading difficulties in Foundation Phase were triangulated through biographical data forms, interview schedules and evaluation of the timetable and weekly routine. The sources were examined to approve the evidence in provision with the intent of building a coherent justification for themes. With themes developing from multiple sources and perspectives, study validity was reached (Creswell, 2014).

The researcher considered all negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes: by presenting this contradictory evidence, the account became more realistic and more valid (Creswell, 2014; Creswell, & Poth, 2018). The more experience a researcher had with participants in their settings, the more accurate or valid were findings. Consequently, the researcher kept in touch with the Foundation Phase teachers throughout the study to maintain an in-depth understanding of their support for learners while building credibility to the narrative account. Moreover, peer involvement in debriefing allowed for a check of accuracy of transcription, the relationship between the research questions and data, the level of data analysis from the raw data through interpretation and the enhanced overall validity of the qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).



### **3.9 RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY**

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, in Gray, 2009) and Strauss and Corbin (1990), researchers must adopt a stance of theoretical sensitivity, bias sensitivity and reflexive sensitivity. During this study, the researcher was a data collection instrument as the researcher collects data by examining documents and interviewing participants (Creswell, 2014). Other notable roles of the researcher included taking notes and deciding which topics to record, how to set up the agenda for the data collection, the type of the questions for data collection and how the questions were asked (Kumar, 2019).

The researcher ensured that data were analyzed based on the research questions by linking the methods chosen to the type of analysis rationale applied to the study. The researcher played multiple roles but assumed a neutral stance. During data collection, the researcher was the main instrument of collection and assumed the roles of interviewer and facilitator in the semi-structured interviews (Gray, 2009). The next paragraph discusses the research ethics that ensured confidentiality and privacy of the participants.

### **3.10 RESEARCH ETHICS**

McMillan et al. (2014) describe ethics as what is right or wrong from a moral perspective. It also focused on acceptable and unacceptable manner on participants or the researcher. In contrast, Bertram et al. (2016) stress that ethics has to do with right or wrong behaviours. In addition, ethics are principles and guidelines that assist the researcher in conducting ethical studies. In qualitative research, the researcher must inform the participants using a consent form before the researcher conducts the research. A consent form described all features of the study that might influence participants to be willing to participate (Johnson et al., 2014). The researcher must ensure anonymity, privacy and confidentiality and harm to

respondents could be considered when conducting her research (Okeke, & Van Wyk, 2015).

The researcher started by applying for ethical clearance from the Unisa Ethics Review Committee and obtaining approval before she conducted the study. The researcher also submitted the prescribed completed research application form to the Limpopo Department of Education and attached all research tools such as the semi-structured interviews schedule and letter to ask for permission to do research in some of the schools in the Sekhukhune East District. The researcher submitted a written request to the principals of the five schools to request permission to conduct the study at their schools. Copies of approved letters from the Limpopo Department of Education at Sekhukhune East District manager's office were attached to the letters via emails.

The researcher had to phone all the Foundation Phase teachers and learner support teachers from the five identified schools requesting them to take part in the study. The participants were requested to email consent in writing indicating that they had agreed to be interviewed telephonically. Before commencing with the collection of data, the researcher called all participants to explain the research process and to assure them that their privacy and confidentiality would be respected.

### **3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter focused on the research methodology used in the study. It elaborates the characteristics of a qualitative methodology, followed by an explanation for the adoption of this approach. The chapter discussed in detail the research approach, research design, population, sampling type and sampling size, data collection, piloting of interviews, data analysis, document analysis, trustworthiness, positionality, and research ethics. The next chapter presents the analysis of the collected data, interprets and discusses the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on data presentation and analysis for this qualitative study. Sources of data are semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Interviews make a move away from seeing human subjects as easy to manipulate and data as somehow external to individuals and towards regarding knowledge as generated between human, through conversation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, cited in Zulu & Mukeredzi, 2021). Document analysis was conducted clement the interview data.

SCHOOLS	CODES FOR PARTICIPANTS	DESIGNATION	TEACHING EXPERIENCE	QUALIFICATIONS
A	1 GR.1	Teacher- PL1	10 months	BA. Degree, Post-Graduate Certificate(PGCE)
A	2 GR.2	Teacher-PL1	29 years in Grade 2	Secondary Teachers Diploma(STD), Advanced Certificate in Education management, BED in Foundation Phase
A	3 GR.3	Teacher-PL2 (Departmental Head in Foundation Phase)	20 years in Grade 3	Senior Primary Teacher Diploma(SPTD), ACE, Diploma in Adult Basic Education

B	4 GR.1	Teacher PL1	12 years	SPTD, ACE
B	5 GR.2	Teacher PL2 (Departmental Head in Foundation Phase)	31 years in Grade 2	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma (JPTD), ACE, BED. Honours in Education management
B	6 GR.3	Teacher PL1	32 years	JPTD
C	7 GR.1	Teacher PL1	8 years	SPTD
C	8 GR.2	Teacher PL2(Departmental Head)	26 years	JPTD, ACE in Life Orientation
C	9 GR.3	Teacher PL1	3 years	B.Com, Post Graduate Certificate in Education(PGCE)
D	10 GR.1	Teacher PL1	9 months	B.Com, PGCE
D	11 GR.2	Teacher PL2(Departmental Head)	10 years in grade 2	BED in Foundation Phase, Early Childhood Development Diploma, Assessor course
D	12 GR.3	Teacher PL1	10 months	National Diploma in Agricultural management, Post Graduate

				Certificate in Education
E	13 GR. 1	Teacher PL2(Departmental Head)	28 years in Foundation Phase	BA., PGCE, Advanced Certificatein Education(ACE)

E	14 GR.2	Teacher PL1	1 year in Grade 2	BED in Intermediate Phase
E	15 GR.3	Teacher PL1	20 years in Foundation Phase	JPTD, ACE in Mathematics

**Table 4.1:** Biographical presentation of participants

The codes presents the following:

**School A:** Grade 1 teacher 1 has ten month experience.

She holds BA. Degree and Post Graduate Certificate in Education [PGCE]. Grade 2 teacher 2, have 29 years' experience and holds Secondary Teachers Diploma (STD), Advanced certificate in management and BED in Foundation phase. Grade 3 teacher, teacher no.3 is a departmental head who have 20 years' experience. She hold Senior Primary Teachers Diploma [SPTD].

**School B,** Grade 1 teacher 4, has 12 years' experience and she holds Junior Primary teacher Diploma. Grade 2 teacher 5 is a departmental head and has 31 years' experience. She holds JPTD, ACE, and Bed. Honour in education management. Grade 3 teacher no.5 has 32 years' experience. She holds JPTD.

**School C,** Grade 1 teacher no. 6 has 8 years' experience and holds SPTD. Grade 2 teacher no.7, has 26 years' experience. She holds JPTD and ACE. Grade 3 teacher no.8 has 26 years' experience and JPTD and ACE.

**School D:** Grade 1 teacher no. 9 has 9 years' experience. She holds B.com and PGC. Grade 2 teacher no 10 years is a departmental head and holds BED in foundation and ECD. Grade 3 teacher no.10 has ten month experience. She holds National Diploma in Agriculture.






**School E:** Grade 1, is a departmental head, 28 years' experience, she hold BA, PGCE. Grade 2 has one year experience. She holds BEd in intermediate phase. Grade 3 has 20 years' experience and holds JPTD and ACE in maths.

## 4.2 SAMPLE

All the selected schools have three participants in the study. The sample consisted of five quintile one, no fee primary schools as stipulated in section 20 of SASA (1996), ten PL1 Teachers and five PL2 teachers. The researcher employed a purposive sampling method. In purposive sampling, the cases to be included in the sample are handpicked on the basis of the judgement of their typicality and in this study the researcher build up a sample that is satisfactory to his or her specific needs (Cohen et al., 2000, in Zulu & Mukeredzi, 2021; Rule & John 2011, as cited in Shinga & Pillay, 2021). The researcher chose teachers who have been teaching in the Foundation Phase. Participating schools were named school A, B, C, D, and E. Table 4.2 presents the codes for each participants:

Codes	School	Teacher No.	Grade
AFT1GR1	A	1	1
AFT2GR2	A	2	2
AFT3GR3	A	3	3
BFT4GR1	B	4	1
BFT5GR2	B	5	2
BFT6GR3	B	6	3
CFT7GR1	C	7	1
CFT8GR2	C	8	2
CFT9GR3	C	9	3
DFT10GR1	D	10	1
DFT11GR2	D	11	2
DFT12GR3	D	12	3
EFT13GR1	E	13	1
EFT14GR2	E	14	2
EMT15GR3	E	15	3
TOTAL NO.		15	

**Table 4.2:** Codes for each participant

-  : AFT1Gr1: participants from school A - Female –Teacher number 1 to 3-Gr. 1 to. 3
-  : BFT4Gr1: participants from school B-Female- Teacher number 4 to 6-Gr. 1 to 3.
-  : CFT7Gr1: participants from school C- Female- Teacher number 7 to 9-Gr.1-3:
-  : DFT10Gr1: participants from school D- Female-Teacher number 10 to 12-Gr.1-3
-  : EMT15Gr3: participants from School E- 1 Male and 2 Females-Teacher number 13 to 15- Gr.1-3

### **4.3 DATA COLLECTION**

Due to COVID-19 pandemic regulations, the researcher was granted permission to collect data telephonically. In each school, data collection took 25-30 minutes long telephonic interview with each participant. Fontana and Frey (2005, as cited in Humberstone & Prince, 2020) affirm that telephonic interviews and face-to-face interviews from participants' households are most likely to be included in the structured interview. According to Stapac (2011), direct interviews are opted for, if one wants to extract in-depth and understandable information. The researcher conducted interviews with the participants after school hours to understand support for learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase, from the interviews' point of view and to uncover the meaning of their experiences. For data to be analyzed, a phone recorder was used for its accuracy to capture the proceedings as it would not be possible for the researcher to write down all what the participants say. The participants consisted of Foundation Phase teachers. The data collection was conducted over five weeks. The following concepts extracted from interview questions assisted the data collection process.

- Understanding support
- Teachers' support strategies
- Methods to enhance and strengthen support.

### **4.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

#### **4.4.1 Data Presentation: School A**

##### **School profile**

School A to School E are public school located in Malokela Circuit under Magakala Cluster in the Sekhukhune East District in Limpopo Province. The schools are categorized as Quintile one, that contemplated in subsection 1 of SASA 84 of 1996, that set out criteria for the allocation of funding to all public schools in a fair and equitable manner. The learners at school do not pay school fund and they also benefit from



National Schools Nutritional programme (NSNP). The school has a principal, one head of department, 315 learners, nine teachers. There are three teachers who teaches Foundation Phase. The school starts at 8h00 morning and knock off at 15h00. The school admitted learners from Grade R to 7. The library is available but the learners rely on classroom reading corner. Due to Covid-19 restriction reading was not effective. School B enrolled 987 and has six foundation phase teachers. School B does not have library. The learners depend on reading corners even though Covid- 19 was a challenge to them. School C has Library facilities and teacher librarian. They also have time-table. Participants said, foundation phase periods are on Monday and intermediate and senior phase periods are on Thursday. But due to Covid- 19 restrictions library was not effective.

### **Theme 1: Understanding support**

Regarding how teachers understand support for reading in the Foundation Phase, all participants provided several explanations of a broader understanding of support. Some regarded support as assisting in profiling of learners, while to some support was regarded as identifying strategies to address learners' challenge such as remedial, extra-class and learner concession. Even though participants gave various explanations, they have limited understanding of support for learners with reading difficulties.

*AFT1GR1: Support involves the strategies that the teachers use to help the learners in order to overcome his or her reading difficulties.*

*AFT3GR3: We understand that support is to diagnose the problem and resolve it. Meaning, when you identified the learners with reading difficulties, it is important to give them extra-time, extra –work to read letters or sounds, syllables, words, short paragraphs, different story book to read.*

*BF5GR 2; 'We ' identified the learners with reading difficulties and give them extra-time, Extra–work to read letters or sounds, syllables, words, short paragraphs, different Storybook to read.*

The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Hugo and Phala (2020) who suggest that support is all activities which increase the capacity of a school to respond to diversity. These findings were corroborated with Donald et al., (2014) who aver that support is an approach that focuses on providing help from within schools, staff, parent, and learners. The DBE (SIAS, 2014) outlines a notion of support as identification for learners' potential at an early age. These findings are in line with PIRLS report (2016) that shows educators have limited understanding of how to support learners with reading difficulties because they do not have enough skill.

Regarding understanding support, participants indicated that when SBST implement the SIAS policy at their school following all the process and procedure for screening, identifying, assessing and supporting learners with reading difficulties. The participants showed that they understand the initial screening for admission. When learner needed support, they just give the learners level one books, but they do not check whether learner struggling with sounds or syllables.

*CFT7Gr.1 "Support" is when the SBST implements the SIAS process, identify learners' potential at an early age and assist in profiling of learners and identify strategies to address the challenges such as remedial, or giving extra-classes or learner concessions, as discussed in chapter 2, section 2.1 of SIAS process.*

The findings of the current study are contradict with those of Azis et al. (2016) who confirmed that before the teacher can start with the support process, the learners' parents or caregivers should be invited to discuss the initial screening results and teacher's plan of action (Azis et al., 2016). Therefore, this study agrees with Estelle's (2020) findings which showed that SIAS policy is not implemented because the purpose of SBST was underutilized (Estelle, 2020).

Participants agree that Foundation Phase learners should be able to segment the words into syllables. For example, in **English First Additional Language we teach** (**dig= /d/i/g/**) and also blend the syllables to make the words (**/d/i/g/=dig**); in **Sepedi**

**Home Language** we teach (**bona=/bo//na/**) and ( **/bo//na/= bona**. They should also learn to clap the syllables, count the number of syllables per word and be able to identify the rhyming words in the sentence. They are expected to have a personal phonic book and each page of the phonic book should have different sounds that they have learned every day.

These findings are aligned with National Reading Panel Report (2000), which postulates the importance of teaching reading using a systematic phonemic approach and identified the five skills that produce good reader. Learners are also expected to read and write one or two sentences using the given words without memorizing them, for example: in FAL: **I can dig a hole** / in HL: **Bana ba bona noga**. This is confirmed in Chapter 2 of this study, CAPS Document (DBE, 2010) stated that, by the end of Grade 3, learners are expected to have mastered a high level of communicative competence and be able to read at least grade level. These

findings corroborate with the study conducted by Scalton, Kimberly, Anderson, and Sweeney (2017), which confirmed that to read with understanding, learners should master technical aspects of reading such as phonemic awareness and phonics, alphabetic principles, vocabulary and sight words and comprehension skills such as summary and fluency (Scalton et al., 2017).

## **Theme 2: Teachers' support strategies**

### **Multidisciplinary reading approach**

The study found that all participants provided various reading strategies such as shared reading, group reading, paired reading, independent reading, and reading aloud. The researcher found that those multi-disciplinary approaches or strategies are in line with DBE, (2019); Sarudin, Hashim and Yunus (2019). But, there was no evidence whether the participants use all reading strategies at the same period or not. Additionally, the study found that all participants have limited knowledge and understanding to differentiate the use of these reading strategies.

*AFT2GR2: We use all types of reading strategies because they are different, for example when using read aloud it helps them to develop a love of reading, and motivation to read on their own. Learners can familiarize with various texts and gain more vocabulary. During paired reading, I encourage mixed ability group, fluent reader with struggle reader to assist those learners.*

These findings are in line with findings of the study conducted by Scalon et al. (2016) who cited that interactive teaching strategies should be applied in the classroom to maintain learner attention. This study that was conducted in Zimbabwe revealed how teachers use various strategies to support learners with reading difficulties, namely, direct-teaching strategy and learner-centred strategy (Lumadi, 2016). Furthermore, another study conducted by Lumadi (2016) also found that teachers have limited knowledge of differentiating. Findings of the two studies mentioned earlier and the current study align with PIRLS (2016) report that suggests that teachers have limited understanding of how to support learners with reading barriers because they do not have the appropriate skills to do so.

BFT4GR1 agreed that Shared Reading and Group guided are the best reading strategies they use. In shared reading, all learners are actively involved and shy learners can be able to share their own experiences with the teacher and their peers. Group guided are arranged according to their abilities and choose the books that are

suitable for their levels and benefit more from their peers.

These findings support the idea of Vygotsky's theory of social interaction with peers (Chapter 2 section 2.3.9 of this study). It is also supported by DoE (2008) when indicating that Group guided provides learners with an opportunity to integrate their developing knowledge of print, letter-sound relationship and learner became more independent and confident. This finding is in agreement with Lumadi's (2016) findings which showed that group work requires active teachers and helps learners to work together to encourage each other to read and write. These findings further support the idea of Nel and Nel (2016) who showed that through shared reading, the learners' confidence in reading improves and sight words and vocabulary are extended.

Regarding teachers' support strategies, participants agreed that group reading in their classroom shows good results because it is teacher-centred instructional activity. The teacher is responsible to group the learners according to their reading abilities and interests. Learners also use their five finger strategies during reading; each group should choose group leader.

*CFT9Gr.3“ I select a suitable graded reading book for the learners on the basis of their instructional level.”*

This finding is aligned with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory that affirmed that social constructivist view reading as not only decoding but as a social interaction in real life situation. Teachers who follow this view believe that the reading level of learners can be enhanced through scaffolding (Jubran, 2016). This finding corroborates the ideas of Fesi and Makeleni (2021) who confirmed that teachers group learners according to their abilities and let their peers assist them, those who can read fluently and with understanding (Fesi & Makeleni, 2021).

DFT12GR 2 agree that reading aloud is their best strategy to support their learners with reading difficulties. The participants confirmed the benefits of this strategy to explore the learners to different text and to increase their vocabulary and

Language skills, develop their love for reading and motivation to learn to read and model fluency.

These findings further support the idea of Nalibali programme which posits that reading aloud is always a performance that allows learners read for enjoyment, expose learners to new languages and develop love of reading ([www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org)). This finding corroborates the findings of Lumadi's (2016) study which confirmed that teachers used are group work and reading aloud, giving learners more reading and writing activities, dictionary to search meaning of words and more remedial work for learners with reading difficulties (Lumadi, 2016). These findings contradict the study conducted by Fesi and Mncube (2021) who argue that reading aloud in front of peers can provoke anxiety among learners who struggle with reading (Fesi & Mncube, 2021).

Participants indicated that independent reading is the best because learners can choose their own book of interest at the reading corner or library. It helps learners to gain more confidence and self-esteem during in order to be fluent reader. They confirmed that independent reading allows the teacher to discuss and have dialogue with the learner. Additionally, the teacher can be able to observe and listen to the learner. It also helps the teacher to identify learners' difficulties and learners can concentrate during reading session because they are aware that the teacher is observing and listening to their reading behaviours.

The weakness of these strategies is where the learner chooses their own book of interest, she or he can be able to memorize the content of the whole text. Some of the learners lose confidence when the teacher corrects their mistakes or if the teachers are not patient or unwilling to observe and listen to what they are reading. Teachers also lack time to support learners because they are travelling every day, when getting in the classroom they sleep rather support learners who are struggling.

*EFT14GR2: I encouraged the learners to choose books that have been read in the shared and guided reading sessions or what they have been checking out during the week in the library.*



This finding concurs with that of Madikiza, Cekiso, Tshotsho, and Landa (2018), which encourage teachers to use clue to help learners better understand what the

read. This finding is in line with Vygotsky's idea of scaffolding learners' development recognized that there are some learners who cannot read independently, but they would be able to do so with the assistance of expert person. Therefore, a teacher is an expert (Madikiza et al., 2018).

### **Teachers' knowledge and experience**

Regarding the use of teachers' knowledge and experience to understand Foundation Phase learners, participants provided their own knowledge and experiences on how Foundation Phase learners learn to read. Participants

Expressed their experiences and understanding that Foundation Phase learners learn in different pace because some are fast readers while some are slow readers and some experience difficulties in reading. They need more time, more resources, pictures, concrete objects, rhymes and songs, flashcards, sight words when you teach them to read.

*AFT1GR1: They learn through phonemic awareness when they hear the sounds and able to manipulate it. They learn through segmenting and blending. For example, segmenting the word to make a syllables **hen**=/h/e/n/ blend it to make the word =**hen**. AFT2GR2: They learn through actions, like when, **I do; We do; You do**. For example during phonemic awareness, when we introduce the new sounds, we usually say, when they hear the word that is not the same with the sound of the day, they must do “**THUMBS DOWN**”; if the word has the same sound of the day, they must do “**THUMBS UP**”. AFT3GR3 They learn through interaction or share with others. They need help from their peers or their teacher. Especially during group reading or paired reading.*

These findings are supported by Piaget (1977) who emphasis that individuals construct their own reality on the basis of their active participation. Furthermore, Piaget stage of development also confirms that from seven to 11 years, learners need concrete objects and they need to manipulate the objects by classifying, striate, conserve, and reverse it. These findings correlate with the study conducted by Korkmaz and Karatepe (2018) who encourage the use of multisensory because it made the reading activities more memorable and enjoyable learning experience, but above all, it helped keep the information in learners' long term memory.

Participants confirmed that Foundation Phase learners learn through actions: I do; We do; You do; during phonemic awareness. This finding agrees with findings of the study conducted by Logsdon (2018), which asserts that phonics skills are important for children to be able to read fluently, children who master phonics learn to recognize individual sounds and how to blend them together to read words. Furthermore, the findings correlate with findings of the study conducted by Baidu (2019), which agrees that learners constructing their own meaning and method of learning, which aligns

with Vygotsky's constructivism theory which is a lens that was adopted by the current study of support for learners with reading difficulties, where the participants had to say " I do; we do; you do;" regarding the different reading approaches they employ in their classrooms.

CFT9GR2 Alphabetic **method:** *I teach the learners to recognize the first letter of their names in order to encourage them to learn to read and write their names. Learners can learn that there is a relationship between the sound and letters. Learners will be familiarizing themselves with the signs at the roads, shops, bank, and restaurant like Galitos, bakery and FNB (First National Bank).*

The findings are supported by the study of Scalon et al. (2017) who confirm that learners should understand that the letters in printed words represent the sounds in spoken words and should understand how to use the beginning and the ending letters in words attempt to read and spell words. Therefore, this finding concurs with findings of the study conducted by Jubran (2016) who confirmed that the social constructivist theory views reading as not only decoding but as a social interaction in real life situation.

DFT12GR3 expressed their experiences and knowledge that Foundation Phase learners learn in different pace because some are fast readers while some are slow readers and some experience reading difficulties. They need more time, more resources, pictures, concrete objects, rhymes and songs, flashcards, sight words when you teach them to read.

The above responds supported in Chapter 2. Section 2.10.1 of this study, when Piaget stage of development which is Concrete operational stage, confirmed that from seven to 11, learners need concrete objects and they need to manipulate the objects by classifying, striate, conserve, and reverse it. This finding corroborates the idea of Scalon (2017) who confirms that each learner with reading difficulties is unique, therefore, combination of approaches and strategies should be used to meet the needs of those learners (Scalon, 2017).

Regarding the use of teachers' knowledge and experience to understand Foundation Phase learners as unique person. Furthermore, participants provided their own knowledge and experiences on how they learn to read. They acknowledged that there are faster, slower, average readers and Foundation Phase learners need concrete objects and learn through actions. They need more time, more resources, pictures, concrete objects, rhymes and songs, flashcards, sight words when they are taught to read. The foregoing response is supported in Chapter 2. Section 2.10.1 of this study, when Piaget stage of development which is concrete operational stage confirmed that from seven to 11, learners need concrete objects and they need to manipulate the objects by classifying, striate, conserve, and reverse it.

"EMT15GR3": *I use **Phonemic Awareness method**: During this method, the learners must be able to hear the sound and identify sound and able to manipulate it. During my lesson I start with greetings, rhymes and songs, theme vocabulary, and encourages learners to answer the questions of the day using new vocabulary words. I start revising the letters, syllables and words of the previous sounds. I practice the new sounds together with the learners by identifying the sound of the day (I do; We do; You do).*

This finding corroborates with the idea of Hugo and Phala (2020) who highlights that teachers need to consider the learners' reading levels, when attempting to understand how learners learn to read to be able to provide adequate support (Hugo & Phala, 2020). This finding agrees with Fesi and Makeleni (2020) who also indicates that teachers need to equip themselves with new strategies of teaching reading to meet the learner academic demands, linguistic as well as social needs (Fesi & Makeleni, 2020).

### **Planning for support**

Regarding how to plan for support to accommodate learners with reading difficulties, participants gave similar opinions that they do plan together as Foundation Phase teachers but differentiate activities according to the learners' grades is difficult for them. (Progression is not taken into consideration). They also indicated that the

Classroom must be print-rich environment, meaning that teachers must prepare weather charts, birthday charts, duty list, class list, timetable, and pictures. Participants acknowledged that during teaching and learning, they review previous sounds or letters, syllables, words, and sentences with learners who are experiencing difficulties in reading.

*CFT8Gr.2 “during” our lesson planning, we check the theme for the week and all the daily activities, like rhymes or songs for the week. We prepare our display boards according to their colours such as: **green board to display theme vocabulary for the week; blue board to display sight words for the week; yellow board to display phonics for the week; pink board to display writing frame for the week.** When I introduce new sound I use thumbs-up and thumb-down to identify the odds sounds and words. I prepare big books for shared reading and readers that are suitable for their level in group guided reading.*

These findings contradict with the study conducted by Phala (2016), which acknowledges that the lessons were planned in such a way that they allowed the teachers to teach one topic for the whole class but the lesson were differentiated in terms of the activities the learners would do. However, this finding of the current study is supported by the study conducted by Nel, Nel and Hugo (2016), which confirms that teachers should plan a lesson on the same topic on which every learner in the class can work together at his pace level of ability to access the curriculum at a specific time.

Participant agreed that during panning, even though they do not plan together, they make their classroom colorful and attractive with pictures on the walls. They prepare weather charts, birthday chart, duty list, and class list, timetable, and word pictures.

*BFT6GR3, "Foundation" Phase classroom must look attractive with colorful pictures.*

These findings contradict with the study conducted by Farrel and Ives (2016) who argue that teachers may not reflect enough o lesson planning and teaching style to fill the intellectual demand of the profession that would support reading proficiency (Farrel & Ives 2016). This study agreed with the study conducted by Hugo and Phala (2020) who confirm that teachers need to be more knowledgeable on how to plan and support learners with diverse learning needs in their classrooms.

Participants agreed that planning done together once a week to check the theme for the week and all their daily activities that should be done. Participants also indicated that during their planning they prepare their display board for support in advance and phonics words, sight words, theme vocabulary and writing frame that will be displayed for the week. The displayed boards help the learners to familiarize themselves with words. Writing frame is the activity that should be completed by learners at the end of the lesson.

*We prepare our display boards according to their colours such as: **green board to display theme vocabulary for the week; blue board to display sight words for the week; yellow board to display phonics for the week; pink board to display writing frame for the week.***

These findings concur with the study conducted by Fesi and Makeleni (2020) who report that few numbers of teachers use visual arts for reading. This finding is correlate with Hugo and Phala (2020) who confirmed that teachers need to be more knowledgeable on how to plan and support learners with diverse learning needs in their classrooms (Hugo & Phala, 2020).

Regarding help to planning for support learners with reading difficulties, participants acknowledge quarterly workshop that they attended. They indicated that they were given the manuals like NECT manual (NECT, 2014), Room to Read, EGRA (2014)



and PSRIP. Even though the SIAS document is not properly followed but the DBE provides them with it, for SIAS of learners with reading difficulties (SIAS, 2014). Furthermore, participants indicated that teachers' guides, learners DBE Workbooks for learners, assessment tool for learners and timetable or weekly routine give them the direction to support learners with barriers to reading in the Foundation Phase.

These findings correlate with Maebana et al. (2022) who argue that although the workshops are attended, teachers in the Foundation Phase in South African primary schools are faced with the challenges of addressing the illiteracy level. Government has implemented a variety of programmes in training and empowering educators, but teachers found themselves overwhelmed with the responsibility of planning and implementing the reading strategy in the Foundation Phase. Furthermore, the study revealed that teachers' level of confidence in teaching reading in Foundation Phase is low (Maebana et al., 2022).

Regarding planning for support, participants indicate that when preparing lessons, they do not consider differentiation and even their activities are just the same with those needing support. They use teachers manuals and Annual Teaching Plan, CAPS document, assessment framework, level one reader books, DBE workbook and NECT planner, to guide them during lesson planning. They also check the theme for the week and all the daily activities, like rhymes or songs for the week. They also indicated that the classroom must be print-rich environment, meaning that teachers must prepare weather charts, birthday charts, duty list, class list, timetable, and pictures. We also attended more workshop for reading but we were never trained how to plan and differentiate lesson plan and activities to support learners with reading difficulties.

"EFT14GR2" noted that: *We prepare our display boards according to their colours such as: green board to display theme vocabulary for the week; blue board to display sight words for the week; yellow board to display phonics for the week; pink board to display writing frame for the week.*

These findings concur with Hugo and Phala (2020) who confirmed that planned

workshops by the district officials, but lack of formal training on how to teach reading to support learners with reading difficulties was not addressed (Hugo & Phala, 2020).

### **Reading with understanding**

Regarding reading with understanding, participants expect learners to have mastered sounds, syllables words and one to two sentences. Participants agreed that Grade 3 learners should be able to read fluently with understanding, read two to three paragraphs, able to follow instructions and to create their own stories to convey a message in both EFAL and HL Languages. All participants provided these responses:

DFT11Gr.2: *Learners are expected to recognize or identify the sounds/ letters, able to read the syllables and words. Learners should be able to segment the words into syllables. For example, in **English First Additional Language we teach (dig= /d/i/g/) and also blend the syllables to make the words (/d/i/g/=dig); in **Sepedi Home Language we teach (bona=/bo//na/) and ( /bo//na/= bona. They should also learn to clap the syllables, count the number of syllables, word and able to identify the rhyming words in the sentence. They are expected to have a personal phonic book and each page of the phonic book should have different sounds that they have learned every day. This is in line with (DoE, 2008:16) when state that arrange for each learner to have a personal wordbook and each page of the wordbook should have a different letter of the alphabet. Learners also expected to read and write one or two sentences using the given words without memorizing it, for example: in FAL: **I can dig a hole / in HL: **Bana ba bona noga.*********

This finding is confirmed in Chapter 2 of this study, CAPS Document (DoE, 2010:7-9), which asserts that by the end of Grade 3, learners are expected to have mastered a high level of communicative competence and be able to read at least grade level. However, the Foundation Phase teachers expect learners to read and write at a certain point in order to be promoted to the next grade, but it reflected that various assessment conducted internationally such as ANA, PIRLS, SACMEQ and NRP reveal that most learners were reading below their grade level. These findings concur with Govender and Hugo (2020) that most Grade 3 learners, including those in FSSs, have not reach level in reading and are left behind as a result.

However, the National Protocol for Promotion Requirements (NPPPR, DoE, 2015, National Assessment Circular 1 of 2018; Circular 2 of 2019, and 3 of 2021) also indicate that learners should not repeat the same phase more than one year, even though the learner cannot read or write, she or he should be progressed to the next grade while Circular 2 of 2019, 2021, indicated mark adjustment of 5% can be done in different subjects (DBE, 2021).

*“DFT12Gr.2” we encourage learners to master alphabet from Grade R. Encourage teachers to use pictures, so that the learners will be able to recognize the name of the picture by the beginning letter of alphabet.* This will enable them to know and understand during phonemic awareness. They also indicate that they should make sure that when learners progressed to the next grade, be able to segment, blend, and read and write their own sentences using familiar words or pictures.

These findings agree with the study conducted by Pulatova (2021), which asserts that in reading lessons, special attention is paid to increasing the vocabulary and ability to read with understanding. Furthermore, these findings also corroborate with the study conducted by Nieuwoudt, (2022), which confirmed that the Foundation Phase (Grade R to Grade 3) at a school lays the groundwork for developing reading skills and reaching a level of reading proficiency by Grade 3. When learners reach Grade 4, they are expected to read fluently and with comprehension as this is the year in a child’s schooling when they start with formal exam and need to read for information. These findings are in line with literature found in the PIRLS conducted in 2016 (Govender and Hugo, 2020) that most Grade 3 learners, including those in FSSs, have not reach level in reading and are left behind as a result.

Regarding how teachers understand support for reading in the Foundation Phase, all participants provided various explanations of support. Some understand support as to diagnose the problem and resolve it. In this study, they mean teachers identify learners with reading difficulties and gives them extra lessons or remedial lessons.

*DFT10GR1: We identify the learners with reading difficulties and give them extra-time, extra-work to read letters or sounds, syllables, words, short paragraphs, different story book to read.*

These findings of the current study are consistent with those of Caldwell and Leslie (2016) who confirmed support as the concepts of reading remediation, reading intervention and reading support used by teachers (Caldwell & Leslie, 2016). These findings further support the idea of Donald et al., (2017), which agree that support is an approach that focuses on providing help from within schools, staff, parents, and

learners.

Participants agreed that learners are expected to recognise or identify the sounds and understand the relationship between the letters and sounds. The learners should be able to segment the words into syllables-rata=/ra//ta/ and blend the syllables into words- /ra//ta/=rata; should also be able to form their own sentence using the same words- (**Morutiši o rata bana bao ba šomišago Bokgobapuku go bala**). Additionally, the learners should be able to read and retell the story with understanding and able to write about something that they have learned in the story. They should be able to search simple words from their own dictionary in both languages and able to answer comprehension passage. Most learners are unable to read with understanding.

These findings of the current study are consistent with those of Howie et al., (2017) who confirmed that learners struggle to retrieve the most fundamental information from the text to answer even simple questions. The findings of the study are in line with what Spaul (2016) who pointed that South African learners may not necessarily be struggling with English as a second language only but struggle with reading and with showing understanding, regardless of language of testing (Spaul, 2016).

Furthermore, these findings correlated with the PIRLS report that many Foundation Phase learners are struggling to read with understanding or originate the meaning from the text (PIRLS, 2017).

Chapter 2, section 2:3, the researcher provided a clear explanation of support seen from international and South African perspectives. Three participants pointed that, *“Support is a plan of action that teachers shall be doing to assist learners with learning challenges. It is the ways to address the problems in learning.”* Even though

they were claiming to understand support, some of them are not sure whether they are doing it right.

These findings resonate with those of the study of Mphahlele (2018) who confirms that support is when every learner have activities that are suitable for their reading stage and the teacher assist the learner through drilling and practices until the learning goal is achieved (word recognition) within stipulated time (Mphahlele, 2018). It can be done using different materials such as flash cards, pictures and other concrete objects.

Regarding reading with understanding, participants indicate that learners are expected to recognise or identify the sounds and relationship between the letters and sounds. The learners should be able to segment the words into syllables- rata=/ra//ta/ and blend the syllables into words- /ra//ta/=rata; should also be able to form their own sentence using the same words - **(Morutiši o rata bana bao ba šomišago Bokgobapuku go bala)**. Additionally, the learners should be able to read and retell the story with understanding and able to write about something that they have learned in the story. They should be able to search simple words from their own dictionary in both languages and able to answer comprehension passage.

This finding is in line with the study conducted in USA that revealed the importance of teaching reading using a systematic phonemic approach and identifying the five skills that produce good readers. These findings agree with those of Phala's (2019) study who confirms that learners learn gradually as they undergo different stages to become independent reader (Phala, 2019). However, it is in contrast with Pretorius et al., (2016) who argue that learners undergo four stages of reading for them to become fluent readers (Pretorius et al., 2016).



## Assessment for reading

Regarding assessment for learners with reading difficulties, participants highlighted that learners are being assessed independently through paired reading or group reading. However, participants indicated that learners fail to interpret pictures, read the beginning sounds, segment, blend syllables to make words and read even one sentence. These findings indicate that assessment for reading reveals further challenges that learners in the Foundation Phase encounter with reading.

AFT1GR1 said: *During independent reading, paired reading or group reading, a learner cannot interpret pictures, cannot read the beginning sound of the picture, segment or blend the syllables, cannot decode the words, or read even one sentence.*

The findings above support the recommendation made in the study conducted by Nel et al., who highlight that some learners in the Foundation Phase require individual attention such as the remedial readers, independent reading or individual reading as most suitable strategy (Nel et al., 2016; DoE,2008). These findings are in consistent with the study conducted by Mzila, (2016), which confirms that decoding and comprehension are elementary components of reading. Moreover, these skills are regarded as the most important reading skills to be acquired by learners because they form the basis of all learning (Mzila, 2016).

Participants showed that learners are continuously assessed during independent reading or paired reading but most of the learners are unable to interpret pictures, read the beginning sound, cannot red syllables, word or even one sentence. Some can read the sound but unable to read the syllables, while some read the syllables but are unable to read the words.

BFT5Gr.2 *“During” independent reading, paired reading or group reading, a learner cannot interpret pictures, cannot read the beginning sound of the picture, segment or blendthe syllables, cannot decode the words, or read even one sentence.*

These findings contradict with the current study which EGRA requires the learners to read for one minute in each of the three components, letter sounds, word reading

and passage reading (Hugo & Govender, 2020). This finding concurs with Gumede's (2018) findings which showed that the assessment of learners on a continuous basis is vital as it assists teachers in identifying gaps in the skills, knowledge, attitude, and values that are needed by learners who experience barriers to learning.

Regarding assessment, Foundation Phase learners are assessed continuously either formally or informally. With regard to reading, learners are given sounds or letters, syllables, words, nonsense words, after mastering the sounds, syllables and words, required learners to form and read one sentence to two sentences.

These findings agreed with the study conducted by Gumede (2018), which confirmed that the assessment of learners on continuous basis is vital as it assists teachers in identifying gaps in the skills, knowledge, attitude, and values that are needed by learners with barriers to learning. If learners are properly assessed, the barriers that they experienced in learning to read will be identified at an early stage and they can receive necessary support. These findings are in line with DBE (2017), which highlights that it is important that all educators are expected to the differentiated curriculum. This is attainable if the content, teaching methods, different strategies, and variety of teaching and learning materials are employed by teachers, irrespective of the stream they are teaching.

Regarding assessment for reading, participants confirmed that learners are assessed continuously. Previously learners were assessed in writing and writing annually. Room to Read also conducted their own assessment *Drop all and Read*, PSRIP which was also assessing reading, now they brought EGRA, which is currently conducted at selected schools. These assessment programmes brought frustrations and confusions to teacher and learners at many schools.

This finding is in line with PIRLS report (2017) in which the Foundation Phase teachers are expecting learners to read and write at a certain point in order to be promoted to the next grade many assessment conducted internationally such as ANA, PIRLS, SACMEQ and (NRP reveal that most learners were reading below their grade level. The National Protocol for Promotion Requirements (NPPPPR, DoE,

2015) also stipulates that learners should not repeat the same phase more than one year, even though the learner cannot read or write, she or he should be progressed to the next grade. These findings of the current study are consistent with those of Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) who confirmed that teachers claim to be doing the right thing in the classroom in terms of reading instruction; their schools literacy results assert that teachers' understanding of the methodology and concept required for effective reading instructions do not match what is required (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016).

Regarding assessment, participants confirmed that learners are continuously assessed, either formally or informally. But during assessment, they are able to identify learners who are experiencing reading difficulties and need urgent support. Learners read texts that are not in a text, limited vocabulary, they add words that are not in the text and are unable to decode.

*"EFT13GR.1": We use a notebook to record learners who need extra-work and extra-time to give them support.*

Recording is in line with SIAS, DoE,(2014) who confirms that for a learner profile, SNA 1 should be completed at school by class teacher while SNA 2 should be completed by SBST for further interventions or support in the DBST (DoE, 2014). However, Foundation Phase teachers are expecting learners to read and write at a certain point in order to be promoted to the next grade. South African schools participated in various assessment, as indicated in (PIRLS, 2017).

This is in line with PIRLS report that various assessment conducted internationally such as ANA, PIRLS, SACMEQ and NRP reveal that most learners were reading below their grade level. In contrast, NPPPPR (2015) also stipulates that learners should not repeat the same phase more than one year, even though the learner cannot read or write, she or he should be progressed to the next Grade. EGRA, DBE (2014) is effective in identifying learners who are not at grade level, those who experience poor phonological awareness, letter sounds, comprehension and poor oral reading fluency. It is further indicated that EGRA serves as baseline of early reading

acquisition; it can guide the content that included in instructional programme and an evaluated programme (Mphahlele, 2018).

### **Theme 3: Methods to enhance support**

#### **Parental involvement and lack of parental support**

Regarding the teaching methods that they use to enhance support for learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. All participants indicated that learners are taken to the library and encouraged them to do check-out and take books home. But the study found that the following day learners brought teared books or lost them and some learners crying because their parents did not helped them to read.

*“AFT1GR1” said usually learners are taken to the library and we encourage them to do checkout and take books home. But the following day learners brought tear books, lost it, and learners crying because parents did not help them to read.*

These findings resonates with those of the study conducted by Mbatha (2018), which suggests that parental involvement should demonstrate certain common themes and operative trust models that should lead to a variety of participation from difficult activities based to school. Similarly, the study conducted by Naidoo et al. (2014) suggests that parents need to play an active role in education by monitoring homework, engaging in adult literacy course, liaising with teachers concerning learners' progress and acts as volunteers at schools. As a result, the findings of the current study are in line with stipulations made in DBE (2019) that parents and the local community are important role players to support and promote a reading culture in schools and at home.

Participants agreed that learners are encouraged to have their personal booklet to write new words and take home to revise it. But some of the learners were failing to revise the words or bring back their personal booklet (Dictionary).

This finding is in line with PIRLS report (2017) confirmed that early literacy support in the home environment enhances a positive attitude to reading (Howie et al., 2017). This finding corroborates with Masalesa (2020), which showed that the quality of parents' involvement in their children's lives play an important role in their academic progress. In Grade 1 to Grade 3, where young learners are learning to

read and their homework includes reading at home, parent's illiteracy could slow down their children's progress in becoming literate (Masalesa, 2020).

Participants confirmed that some learners are stubborn, always absent, tear or lost the reader books when taken home, fidget the tables and chairs. Learners also lack concentration. Parents who are working far from home left their children with grandmother or grandfather who unable to support their children, while some parents come home late when children are already slept. The DBE advocates for progression policy, repeaters and age cohort for learners. Participants showed that progression policy demoralized their passion for support.

*"Learners" lack knowledge of sound, blending syllables to make words and unable to read sentences or paragraphs.*

This finding corroborates the idea of Masalesa (2020), which confirms the quality of parental involvement in their children's' lives play an important role in their academic

progress. The findings of the study concur with Fesi and Mncube (2021) who argues that children from poverty-stricken families perform poorly at school.

All participants showed that their challenges are lack of support from parents. The latter are illiterate parents who are unable to support their children because they themselves do not know to read or write. Parents who are working far from home

left their children with grandmother or grandfather are also unable to support their children while some parents come home late when children already sleep. Some are child-headed families owing to deceased parents, alcoholic, divorced or illness. Learners' transfers during the middle of the year affect children progress owing to frequent movement of their parents.

DFT12GR3 responded: *They do not help learners with homework for reading*

These findings correlate with the study conducted by Hugo and Phala (2022), which confirmed that lack of parental involvement creates challenges for the extension of knowledge between the school and the home. The findings of the study concur with those of Fesi and Mncube (2021) who highlights that parental support is lacking as most learners are not supervised when doing homework.

Regarding parental involvement, EFT13GR1; showed that learners lack support from their parents because some are illiterate. Some parents are able to read but they do not have interest to assist their children, even during the school meeting when you call them, they do not respond. Parents who are working far from home left their children with grandmother or grandfather who are unable to support their children while some parents come home late when children already sleep.

These findings are in line with (Landsberg et al, 2016) citing Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory, who postulates that the development of the child is surrounded by layers of relationships such as exo-system where the extended family, parents, friends, neighbours are needed to assist learners who need support. This finding of the current study are consistent with those of Mafokwane (2017) who highlights that parents' own literacy also influences the learners' interest and motivation to read. Furthermore, it is indicated that learners develop a positive attitude towards reading when the parents instill a love for reading books from early stage, either buying books, telling bedtime stories or library books. These findings align with the study of Spaul et al., (2016) who revealed that most families affected by unemployment living in poverty as a results of such circumstances prevent parents from exposing their children to early reading experiences which in turn impacts negatively on the



Foundation Phase learners' reading abilities (Spaull et al., 2016).

### **The use of ICT as a support**

Regarding the use of ICT as a support tool, participants mentioned that they use their own computers for preparing lessons and when they want to teach learners word recognition or alphabet, rhymes and songs. The learners show more interest and fun. Many teachers lack computer skills and the school has only one computer for South African Schools Administration and Management systems (SASAMs) to capture school information.

*AFT3GR3: Learner starts singing a song or rhymes. I show them pictures on my computer, they say the beginning sounds.*

This is in line with chapter 2 section 2.12 of ZPD as a range of task that a learner can perform with collaboration, direction to do more and solve more difficult tasks independently. These findings corroborate with the idea of Hudson and Porters (2016) who confirmed that learners in a more effective, efficient and fun way suggests that ICT may help learners experiencing difficulties to improve their confidence level (Hudson & Porters, 2016). The Annual Performance Plan (2018/2019) of GDE reports that they are marking efforts to align the curriculum to meet the demands of an industrialized society by reconstructing schools to support ICT and driving the eLearning curriculum (GDE, 2019).

BFT6GR.3, indicated that smartboards are very important especially when they teach phonemic awareness and phonics. They allow learners to give names of the pictures and say the beginning sound and write it using smartboard. Sometimes teachers can allow learners to draw the pictures on the board and label it, which make learners show interest and excitement.

The findings corroborate with those of Gear (2006, as cited in Rama & Rahim 2018) when asserting that interesting and fun learning can be created through interesting materials integrated with the internet. This finding concurs with Amin's (2016)

findings which showed that the use of ICT can influence the way learners are taught and how they learn (Amin, 2016). These findings corroborate with the idea of Ghahvifekr et al., (2015) highlight effectiveness with regard to several factors such as enhancing learner collaborative learning skills as well as developing skills that stimulate social skills, problem solving, self-reliance, responsibility, and the capacity for reflection and initiative. This finding aligns with ZPD as a range of task that learners can perform with collaboration, direction to do more and solve more difficult tasks independently.

Regarding the use of ICT, CFT7GR.1; mentioned that they use smart phone to support learners with reading difficulties. Even though connectivity is very low, some teachers allow the learners listen how the words are spelled. Additionally, during listening and speaking, learners listen to the story on the phone and answer the questions, retell the story or dramatize and gain more confidence or summarize the story from the beginning to the end (sequencing of events).

These findings are in consistent with Hudson and Porter (2016) who agree that learners in a more effective, efficient and fun way. ICT may help learners experience difficulties to improve their confidence level (Hudson and Porter, 2016). This finding further supports the idea of Masito, Warnick and Esambe (2017) who support the use of ICT that reading to speech technology, supportive e-text and electronic book can enhance the reading abilities of learners with reading difficulties (Masito et al., 2017). This finding aligns with an idea of Reinhardt (2019) regarding technology advancement and the young generation.

DFT10GR.1: mentioned that their schools have only one laptop for administration and most of them in Foundation Phase, they do not have that knowledge of using it. But all the Foundation Phase classes were given televisions and video players to support the learners with reading difficulties. Teachers can record stories that can be used as a playback for reading.

These findings concurred with the argument of Schwab (2016) that the more time

learners spend immersed in digital reality, the lower their cognitive competencies become. Moreover, they cease to exercise control over their attention with reading becoming a luxury (Schwab, 2016). These findings supported the argument of Florian and Hegarty (2019) who assert that an introduction and application of technology in the classroom environment is required and that is based on learning centred pedagogy (Florian et al., 2019).

EFT14GR.2; mentioned that their schools have only one laptop for SASAMs to capture school database or information. They are unable to use that computer because they had never trained to operate it. They use administration clerk to design flash cards, lesson preparation and for assessment tasks on quarterly basis. Additionally, they mentioned that they are comfortable with chalkboards.

This finding agrees with Amin (2016) who found that ICT can enhance the teacher and learning process as well as the quality and accessibility of education, the learning environment, learning motivation, and scholastic performance (Amin, 2018). The finding of this study supports those of Mphahlele et al.(2018), which confirmed that ICT is fast becoming a key instrument in addressing reading difficulties of poor phonics skills, comprehension, limited vocabulary, poor spelling and slow processing of words (Mphahlele et al., 2018).

## **The role of SBSTs and LSTs**

The study also found that the role of SBST was not well performed. It is supported in Chapter 2, section 2.8, from the study conducted by Estelle (2020), which showed that SIAS policy is not implemented because SBST was underutilized. Additionally, the study found that all participants showed that their schools do not have LSTs who are trained and specialized to support learners with reading difficulties.

Regarding the role played by a LSTs and SBST, when a learner is unable to cope at school, the participants indicated that the SBST shows frustration and confusion about procedures and process of support. The team shows that they do not even know about SIAS policy. They need to be trained and through workshopped about it. Furthermore, participants show that their school do not have LSTs who are qualified and specialized to support learners with reading difficulties. Below participants provided their responses as follows:

*AFT2GR2: Unfortunately, I did not specialize in inclusive education, but I support my colleagues where they need help.*

These statements are in line with Chapter 2, section 2.5.1 of this study when it is confirmed that the role of SBST is to track support provided and store evidence of individual support provisioning and meetings; organize regular meetings with guardians or parents of referred learners; identify training needs for teachers in different phases and organizes combine support for continuing staff development; and develop a policy on managing medication for learners and personal assistance (DBE 2010(a)).

While section 2.4.4 confirmed that LSTs are qualified teachers with relevant knowledge and experience in inclusive education and special needs, their role is to support learners during teaching and learning periods. These findings correlate with the study conducted by Mahlo (2014), which acknowledged that teachers have special skills and competencies to adapt the curriculum to suit the diverse learning needs of learners and enhance support for learners with reading difficulties (Mahlo, 2015 cited in Hugo and Phala, 2020).

The role played by LSTs as qualified teachers who have specific knowledge of remediation and specific needs education (DBE, 2014) and SBST is acknowledged, especially when a learner is unable to cope at school. The participants indicated that the SBST shows frustration and confusion about procedures and process of support. The team shows that they do not even know about SIAS policy.

These findings align with DBE (2014), which confirmed that SIAS process is designed specifically to help educators to assess learning and support needs. This policy aids educators with intervention strategies for learners at an early stage (DBE, 2014). These findings correlated with the study conducted by Estelle (2020),

which confirmed that the SBST was underutilized and this team was not functioning to its best.

CFT8GR.2, confirmed that the role of SBST is to track support provided and keep evidence of individual support provisioning and meetings; organize regular meetings with guardians or parents of referred learners. If the learner is not progressing from support received from the teachers, the learner should be transferred to them (SBST). They should also offer learner support needed, if the learner does not progress, the SBST should complete SNA 2 for district reference. Additionally, the LST are not available at schools. Even though participants highlight the role of SBST, since they do not follow procedure and process of support needed for the learners, they are dysfunctional.

These findings of the current study are consistent with those of Estelle (2020) who confirmed that SIAS is not implemented because SBST was underutilized (Estelle,

2020). These findings further support the idea of Aziz et al. (2016), which also confirmed that before the teacher can start with the support process, the learner's parents should be invited to discuss the initial screening results and teachers' plan of action (Aziz et al., 2016).

Regarding the role of SBST and LST, participants agree that they do not have LSTs who are qualified and relevant to support learners with reading difficulties. The only team that is always available for us, is the SBST.



These statements are in line with Chapter 2, section 2.5.1 of this study confirming that the role of SBST is to track support provided and store evidence of individual support provisioning and meetings and organize regular meetings with guardians or parents of referred learners. The NIED (2014:1) submitted that learner support teachers are more specifically for remedial education, inclusive education and special needs (NIED, 2014). These findings concur with the study conducted by Mahlo (2016), which confirmed that LST are teachers with specialized competencies and ability to modify the curriculum to facilitate learning among learners with diverse needs and prevent learning failure.

EMT15GR.3; indicated that their schools do not have LST but the only team that is available at their school is the SBST. The participants showed that the role of the SBST is to assist the newly appointed teachers to support teachers who are struggling to support teachers with various methods and strategy of reading and provide teachers and learners with teaching and learning materials and to conduct school based workshop concerning support for learners with reading difficulties. It was further indicated that the role of LST should be done by qualified teachers who specialized in supporting learners with reading difficulties.

These findings align with the DoE (2001), which highlighted that the LST role is to evaluate and supporting teaching, building the capacity of school to recognize and address severe learning difficulties and to accommodate a range of learning needs. Therefore, these findings concur with Naidoo et al. (2016) who confirmed that the SBST can also assist by ensuring that learners are taught at entry level in their mother tongue, uses retired teachers for remedial teaching, monitor teachers' lessons on reading regularly (Naidoo et al., 2016).

### **Lack of school infrastructure**

AFT2GR2; AFT3G3; participants showed the challenges they have during support owing to overcrowded classrooms and lack of school and community libraries. Additionally, the study found that extra classes are not effective because teachers who are travelling from one place to another are more than who stay for extra-classes. Teachers who are trying to do extra classes in order to support learners with reading difficulties are also demoralized and have attitude owing to the National Protocol for assessment grade R-12, (2005) that stipulated the Foundation Phase learners for not being retained in a phase for a period exceeding four years, excluding grade R who are not included for the retention period of four years. Additionally, the National Circular 1 of 2018, for special condonation dispensation for Grade 7-9 and circular 3 of 2021 for mark adjustment of 5% for different subjects from Grade 4-9.

These findings corroborate with the study conducted by Aziz et al.,(2016) and Padayachee et al.,(2016), which confirmed that Gauteng schools are overcrowded and still suffer serious infrastructures shortcoming. Overcrowded schools have a teacher learner ration ranging from 1:70 posing challenges for early identifications and support strategies which becomes only possible after a formal assessment (Aziz et al. 2016; Padayachee et al., 2016).

BFT5GR.2; BFT6GR.3; participants indicate that overcrowded classrooms give us stress when teaching group guided and independent reading because it consumes more time. Some teachers discourage learners with reading difficulties from trying to express themselves during reading. Participants indicate that learner-teacher ratio is 1:70.

These findings concur with a study conducted by Gumede (2018), which indicates that overcrowded classrooms are barriers that hindered teachers in their efforts to employ variety of strategies in their classrooms. These findings contradict DBE (2015) that highlights that for public schools in South Africa the teacher to learner ratio should be 1:30.4. if the ratio is exceeded, the classes become overcrowded.

Crowded and ruined classrooms obstruct the implementation of the curriculum.

CFT8GR.2: *Overcrowded classrooms give us stress when teaching group guided and independent reading because it consumes more time. Some teachers discourage learners with reading difficulties from trying to express themselves during reading.*

These findings of the current study are consistent with those of Hugo and Phala (2020) who confirm that overcrowding and lack of enough chairs and tables for learners remains a problem in many South African schools and this needs the attention of various DoE (Hugo & Phala, 2020). Similarly, Karimi et al. (2020) confirm that learners were inattentive and demotivated; hence, the teacher was unable to control the classroom and it was very chaotic owing to big numbers, limited knowledge or reading strategies and lack of reading strategies (Karimi, 2020).

Regarding infrastructure, participants showed that they are unable to implement some of the strategies owing to overcrowded classroom and lack of furniture, library, no fans in their classroom. They also experienced problems in exercising discipline.

T11G2 responded as follows: *I am unable to discipline my learners due to overcrowded class.*

This finding contradicts DBE (2014), which highlights that the learner-teacher ratio for public schools in South African schools was 30:1. Owing to large numbers in the classrooms, most teachers use chorus reading. This is in line with Fesi and Mokeleni (2020) who highlight that learners were inattentive and demotivated; hence, teachers unable to control the classroom and it was chaotic owing to big numbers in the classrooms (Fesi & Mokeleni, 2020).

All participants showed that overcrowded classrooms give them stress, especially during group guided or independent reading because it needs sufficient space. Some teachers discouraged learners with reading difficulties from trying and expressing themselves during reading. Limited reading materials was because the

school does not have a library or any material such as magazines, radio, television, and story books that can encourage learners to reading at school or at home.

These findings agree with Fesi and Makeleni (2020) who revealed that some teachers ignore learners while others were trying to apply individualization but owing to large numbers in the classroom; it was not easy at all. Furthermore, the study revealed that learners are inattentive and demotivated; hence, the teacher was unable to control the classroom and it was very chaotic owing to big numbers (Fesi & Makeleni, 2020).

### **Stakeholder involvement**

Regarding challenges they experienced when support learners with reading difficulties, all participants indicate that support learners with reading difficulties needs different stakeholders in order to be successful, such as PLC committees, which involves the SGB, police, retired teachers or principals, social workers, principal as an ex-officio, NGOs like Nali-pali programmes, businessmen, mining companies to assist schools with infrastructures and interactive boards and unemployed professional youth who specialized in teaching. Participants' responses are as follows:

AFT2GR2 said: *When you support the learners with reading difficulties it is important to involve other stakeholders such as community, parents, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and unemployed professional youth.*

It is supported in Landsberg et al., (2016:13) citing Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory that the development of the child is surrounded by layers of relationships such as exo-system where the extended family, friends and neighbors are needed to assist learners who need support. These findings are in line with Chapter 2 section 2 on Vygotsky's theory during ZPD when stressing that a learner can become competent and sharing common goals when scaffolded or supported in small group created (Gordon, 2014) such as the school, peers and family which are continuously interacting with one another, should play role in supporting learners with reading.

Regarding stakeholders involvement, BFT4GR.1, agreed that when supporting the learners with reading difficulties, it is important to involve other stakeholders such as community, parents, NGOs and unemployed professional youth to motivate parents about reading support for learners and to encourage parents who unable to attend meetings for book viewing (parents open day). It is supported in Landsberg et al., (2016:13) citing Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, that, the development of the child is surrounded by layers of relationships such as exo-system where the extended family, friends and neighbours are needed to assist learners who need support.

These findings correlate with those of Ralejoe,(2021), which confirm that communication between the parents, stakeholders and teachers can be achieved through meetings, letters, phone calls, emails and social media tool (Facebook and Twitter) (Ralejoe, 2021).

Participants indicated that teamwork and collaboration are very important during implementation. They also highlighted the quarterly workshop that they do attend, because they are given the manuals like National Education Collaboration Team manual (NECT, 2014), Room to Read, Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA,

DBE, 2014) and PSRIP. Even though the SIAS document is not properly followed but the DBE provided us with it for Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support of learners with reading difficulties (SIAS DBE: 2014). Teachers' guides and learners DBE Workbooks for learners were also provided. Assessment tool for learners and timetable or weekly routine give us direction during teaching and learning.

These findings concur with Ralejoe, (2021) who believes that open and constant communication is essential for effective collaboration between schools, parents and wider community and can also help foster a share sense of purpose among all stakeholders (Ralejoe, 2021).

Participants indicated that the quarterly workshop were attended before lockdown. They were given the manuals like NECT, 2014, Room to Read, EGRA, DBE, (2014) and PSRIP who had partnership with the DBE. Furthermore, were also adopted by Roomto Read who were allocated reading coach for us, who were assisting to support learners with reading difficulties.

T10GR1 and T11GR3 responses: *Teamwork and collaboration are very important for us because we share experiences with colleagues at the workshops.*

This finding is in line with DBE (2018), which submits that the role of the reading coach is to support teachers in delivering effective reading lessons (DBE, 2018:108). The findings of the study also agrees with those of Ralejoe (2021) who highlights the proposed formation of support groups involving all stakeholders for the purpose of raising awareness about parental involvement in educating parents about their role in the education of their children and improving communication among all stakeholders (Ralejoe, 2021).

Participants indicated that teamwork and collaboration are very important during implementation. They also highlighted about the quarterly workshop that they do attend, because they are given the manuals like NECT manual, Room to Read, EGRA and PSRIP. Even though the SIAS document is not properly followed but the DBE provided them with it, for SIAS of learners with reading difficulties (SIAS,DBE: 2014). Teachers' guides, learners' DBE workbooks for learners, assessment tool for learners and timetable or weekly routine give us direction during teaching and learning.

T13GR1 and T14GR2: *When you support the learners with reading difficulties it is important to involve other stakeholders such as community, parents, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and unemployed professional youth.*

These findings are in line with DBE (2019), which highlights that the role of reading coach is to support teachers in delivering effective reading lesson (DBE, 2019:108)

### **Positive learning environment**

AFT3GR.3, agreed that some learners are being bullied by their fellow learners. As a result, parents opted to withdraw or transfer their learners to another school. Learners play truancy and dropout because their parents keep them at home during teaching and learning and the next year bring them back to school, their peer

labelled them as malingerer learners.

These findings agree with the study by Terzi (2018), which confirms that a positive learning environment for learners with reading difficulties when exposed with equal and fair teaching opportunities could positively influence their learning potential (Terzi, 2018). Furthermore, these findings corroborated with the study conducted by Bermanbieler and Joncheere (2018), which confirms that children with reading difficulties live and grow in a systemic environment where they are vulnerable to social pressure and often excluded from daily activities.

The findings correlate with the study conducted by Berman et al., (2018), which argues that growing up in a society that does not understand that reading difficulties could leave learners with physical, emotional and challenges with feelings of anger, low- self-esteem and a biased self-identity. The CAPS policy stipulated that its



purpose is to equip learners, irrespective of socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment and meaningful participation in society as citizen of a free country (DBE, 2015). These findings agreed with the study conducted by Estelle (2020), which indicates that educators do not merely have a curriculum delivery role but should also develop learners towards self-actualization (Estelle, 2020).

BFT4GR1, confirms that *some learners are star-born, always absent, tear or lost the reader books when taken home, fidget the tables and chairs. Learners also lack concentration. Lack knowledge to sound, blend syllables to make words and unable to read sentences or paragraphs.*

Teachers also lack time to support learners because they are travelling every day. As a result, they implement DBE progression policy, repeaters and age cohort for learners. Nevertheless, participants showed that progression policy demoralized their passion for support.

The findings correlate with the study conducted by Berman et al. (2018), which argue that growing up in a society that does not understand that reading difficulties could leave learners with physical, emotional and challenges with feelings of anger, low self-esteem and a biased self-identity. The CAPS (2015) policy stipulated that its purpose is to equip learners, irrespective of socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfillment and meaningful participation in society as citizen of a free country (DBE, 2015). These findings agreed with the study conducted by Estelle (2020), which indicates that educators do not merely have a curriculum delivery role but should also develop learners towards self-actualization (Estelle, 2020).

CFT9GR3, confirms that some learners are stubborn, always absent, tear or lost the reader books when taken home, fidget the tables and chairs. This finding correlates with the idea of Madyibi and Bayat (2022), which highlights that parents need a conducive environment and parental involvement to overcome the children's' educational inequalities (Madyibi & Bayat, 2022).

DFT12GR.3: indicated that most of the learners are from child-headed families owing to deceased parents, alcoholic, divorced or illness. Learners play truancy and dropout because their parents keep them at home during teaching and learning and the next year bring them back to school. Learners' transfers during the middle of the year affect children's progress owing to frequent movement of their parents. It is necessary to invite professionals such as social workers, health professional to offer counselling for learners who need emotional support and psychosocial support and raise awareness in order to create a conducive environment for learners with reading difficulties.

The findings of the study agree with Rosyida and Ghufon (2018) who assert that a competent, qualified educators should use correct methods to teach reading in an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.

Regarding positive environment, participants indicates that parents take their children to another school due to environmental issues, learners who failed to read bullied other learners, fidget the tables and desks, if they lost their books, they better steal others books and pencils. In chapter 2 section 2.5 the researcher discussed the manifestation of reading difficulties.

EMT15GR3 noted: *Some learners are stubborn, always absent, tear or lost the readerbooks when taken home, fidget the tables and chairs. Learners also lack concentration.*

This finding is in agreement with Madyibi and Bayat (2022) who buttress that parents need a conducive environment and parental involvement to overcome the educational inequalities (Madyibi & Bayat, 2022).

#### **4.5 DATA PRESENTATION FOR DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

Copies of the following documents were requested from all the participants Schools, A, B, C, D and E. and emailed.

- Weekly routine and timetable
- Displayed board for phonics, vocabulary, and writing frame and sight words.
- SIAS Policy (2014)
- NPPPPR, for promotion requirements, adjustment circular 1 of 2020-2021.
- Reading aloud rubric
- Learners assessment chart: for sound, syllables and words
- Reader book level 1
- CAPS document
- PSRIP video.

School A, B, C, D and E provided the researcher with the weekly routine that should be displayed in the classrooms to show activities that are done in the classroom and not correctly followed. The timetable (see Table 4.4) that was not effectively utilized during reading but aligned with CAPS document was also provided to the researcher in all schools.

GRADE	SUBJECTS	TIME ALLOCATION PER WEEK
1	Home Language	7/8 hours per week
	English First Additional Language	3 hours per week
2	Home Language	7/8 hours /week
	English First Additional Language	3 hours /week
3	Home Language	7 hours/week
	EFAL	4 hours

**TABLE 4.3: TIMETABLING AND DAILY ROUTINE FOR READING Source: (NFTR, DBE 2019:102; DBE 2011:9)**

According to DBE (2019), schools offer Home Language seven hours per week and EFAL for three hours per week in Grade 1 and 2. In Grade 3 the time allocation for Home Language is seven hours per week and four hours/week for EFAL. Findings of this study revealed that, in all the schools, the timetable was in accordance with CAPS and included the following from Monday to Friday: shared reading, group reading, phonemic awareness and phonics, writing, handwriting, vocabulary, listening, and speaking.

The researcher was also provided with display boards for phonics, vocabulary, writing frame and sight words that some of the teachers do not comply to implement it in all schools. Furthermore, the SIAS Policy was provided in all schools. However, it was not implemented by the schools. All schools also had the NPPPPR for promotion requirements and number of years that the learner should be retained in each phase. Adjustment circular 1 of 2020-2021 provided by all schools showed subject adjusted at the end of the year for learners who experience difficulties even those who could not read and write. The researcher was also provided with the CAPS document to

Check number of periods allocated on reading. The PSRIP video that some of the schools did not have was provided in School A, B and D.

## **4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The aim of this chapter was to explore support for learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. In this chapter, the researcher presented the data collected through a qualitative inquiry method in line with the following research questions: How do teachers support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase? Which strategies do teachers use to support learners with reading difficulties? Which methods can be used to enhance support for learners with reading difficulties? The findings of this study show that participants used different strategies and methods that were presented to them at the circuit and district workshops when supporting learners with reading difficulties. In the next chapter, the researcher provides a summary of the study, recommendation, limitations and the conclusion of the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, the analysis, interpretation and discussion of the data were presented based on the interview transcriptions of the participated in this study, as well as the information obtained from documents. In this chapter, findings are summarized to draw conclusions and make recommendations that can serve as a guideline to those in the field of education who may benefit from the findings of the study.

### **5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The findings of this research study sought to respond to the aims of the study which was to explore how teachers support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. Overall, this study could contribute to supporting learners with reading difficulties. The study explained teacher understanding of support, describes strategies and methods that teachers used to support learners and described methods that could enhance the support for learners in the Foundation Phase. The findings of this study revealed that Foundation Phase teachers are experiencing challenges in the support for learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. These challenges limit teachers to fully support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase.

SCHOOLS	FINDINGS
A, B, C,D and E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Limited knowledge of support.</li> <li>ii. Lack of LSTs.</li> <li>iii. Insufficient training on support.</li> <li>iv. Rigid teaching approaches.</li> <li>v. Teacher attitude on supporting learners with reading difficulties.</li> <li>vi. Time table for reading and remedial not indicated.</li> <li>vii. SIAS process not effectively followed during support.</li> <li>viii. Teachers lack competency regarding the use of reading strategies.</li> <li>ix. Learners' inability to recognize letters and reversing, omitting letters, skip and inserting letters.</li> <li>x. Learners' attitude towards reading and also lack concentration.</li> <li>xi. Teachers lack competency concerning basic reading skills.</li> <li>xii. Lack of methodology to enhance support.</li> <li>xiii. Lack of teacher specialization and training on support.</li> <li>xiv. Lack of parental support and community involvement.</li> <li>xv. Teachers lack ICT skills to support learners with various materials and e-resources.</li> <li>xvi. Overcrowded classrooms limit support.</li> <li>xvii. Limited school and community libraries and reading clubs.</li> <li>viii. Unsuccessful remedial classes owing to teachers and learners who are travelling every day.</li> </ul>

**Table 5.1: Summary of the findings of School A, B, C, D and E**

### **5.2.1 Finding 1: Limited understanding of support**

The findings of this study revealed that Foundation Phase teachers have a broader and limited understanding of how to support for learners with reading difficulties.

This finding was sought when answering the following research question: How do teachers understand support for learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase? As discussed in Chapter 4 section 4.9.1. Challenges that are experienced by Foundation Phase learners with reading difficulties are presented in the study. It showed that most learners are unable to pronounce words, swap letters, omit, insert, and skip, some words, and unable to recognize sounds. Furthermore, the participants mentioned that learners lack basic skills and display unacceptable behaviors during support. This finding aligns with findings of the study conducted by Kauffman (2019) who argues that for learners to be successful at school, they should learn to read fluently; that is, they should acquire the skills to read effortlessly and smoothly at normal rate with proper expression and with the necessary comprehension. Furthermore, the finding is consistent with another study conducted by Gumede (2018) who affirms that a slow development of reading skills affects more than just academic subjects as it also delays language acquisition, general knowledge, vocabulary building, social competence and acceptance.

The findings showed that teachers identify learners with reading difficulties during different phases of reading assessment. The study found that teachers were not doing proper recording for further intervention such as remedial and extra work for learners who need extra support.

### **5.2.2 Finding 2: Rigid teaching strategies**

The study found that Foundation Phase teachers used rigid teaching approaches as opposed to flexible teaching approaches to structure reading support for learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. The common favored methods that teachers employed were phonemic awareness method, phonic method, vocabulary method, and alphabetic method. Furthermore, the current study revealed that the common reading strategies used by Foundation Phase teachers to support learners with reading difficulties were shared reading, guided reading and paired reading. However, although various methods and strategies were used by Foundation Phase teachers to support learners with reading difficulties, the study



found that not all participants knew how to integrate the different methods and the strategies and how to modify, adapt and differentiate assessment for reading strategies to accommodate diverse ability levels. The findings present the need for teachers to be flexible in the use of various teaching strategies to support learners with reading difficulties as indicated in the DoE (2011) and as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2:12.

The foregoing findings are in line with findings of the study conducted by Estelle (2020), which confirms that teachers did not apply early identification strategies to accommodate learners experiencing reading difficulties. Furthermore, teachers did not have sufficient corrective measures such as framework on differentiation teaching and learning or curriculum adaptation strategies in place to support learners who are experiencing difficulties (Estelle, 2020). This finding is in contrast with DBE (2017), which highlights that it is important that all educators adapt to the differentiated curriculum and this is attainable if the content, teaching methods, different strategies and variety of teaching and learning materials are employed by educators irrespective of the stream they are teaching (DBE, 2017). The area of integration, modify, adaptation, and differentiation are still a challenge for most teachers.

### **5.2.3 Finding 3: Insufficient ICT skills to enhance support**

Findings of this study revealed that some of the schools had ICT resources like laptops. However, teachers lacked computer skills to support learners with reading difficulties using ICT. These findings corroborated with the study conducted by Rashedul and Raihan (2016), which confirms that teachers who did not develop adequate confidence avoid being involved with things concerning to ICT (Rashedul & Raihan, 2016). Similarly, another study found that some teachers admitted that they were reluctant ICT users because they were worried that they might get embarrassed that the learners knew more about the technology that they did not (Noordan & Yunus, 2022).

The current study revealed that Foundation Phase teachers lack proper training and specialisation to support learners with reading difficulties in their classrooms. This

finding is consistent with the findings of Mhlongo's (2019) study, which revealed that the process of teacher training was ineffective and therefore resulted in the feeling of inadequacy to support learners. The current study also revealed that most schools lack libraries and infrastructures to accommodate learners. This finding concurs with Maebana, Molotja and Themane (2022), who assert that learners were packed in an overcrowded classroom of 70, and this impacted negatively on the teaching and learning process since teachers found it hard to control learners when teaching reading, for example, noise making.

#### **5.2.4 Finding 4: Lack of stakeholder support**

The findings of this current study revealed that some of the parents do not cooperate and do not come to school during their invitations. They are unresponsive and unable to take part in the education of their children. From the findings, participants pointed that they experienced poor level of stakeholder's support, such as parents, community clubs and family members, who are ignorant and unable to motivate and assist their children. This finding is in contrary with Vygotsky's theory's emphasis that a learner can become competent when supported by an adult. Participants highlighted in this current study that learners take books to read at home, but parents do not assist them. This finding disagrees with the finding of Howie et al. (2017) when indicating that some of the parents assist their learners with reading activities from the onset of schooling plays a pivotal role in learners' academic achievement (Howie et al., 2017). Additionally, the PIRLS report (2016) highlights that most parents were less positive about reading, while a campaign of parental involvement in schools and learner activities was recommended.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations may determine the successful support for learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase:

- Foundation Phase teachers should attend workshops and register with institutions of higher learning to have a common understanding of support for learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase.
- Teachers should consider the diversity of the learners they teach when choosing teaching strategies and use flexible teaching approaches to support reading in the Foundation Phase.
- Intensive workshops for ICT skills should be provided to Foundation Phase teachers for them to be able to support learners with reading difficulties.
- Different stakeholders should be involved in supporting learners with reading difficulties.
- The district officials should organize workshops to capacitate Foundation Phase teachers with different approaches to support reading regularly and they should monitor and evaluate the implementation of the approaches.
- Schools should adopt different stakeholders and organize reading clubs to support learners with reading difficulties.
- At school, class teachers, LSTs and members of the SBST and SMT should work together as a team to initiate different approaches to support learners with reading difficulties at the school.
- Different stakeholders should be involved to improve reading abilities of learners who experience reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase.
- Institutions of higher learning should establish compulsory courses for all prospective Foundation Phase teachers on addressing barriers to learning and more specifically on how to address difficulties in reading among the diverse reading needs of learners.
- DoE should provide all learners in the Foundation Phase with laptops or tablets and provide data at the schools.
- Teachers should encourage and allow learners to use laptops, tablets or cell phones during reading lessons.
- The use of ICT should be seen as a prerequisite in the Foundation Phase to support learners with reading difficulties.

- Flexible teaching approaches as opposed to rigid teaching approaches on how to structure reading support for diverse learners in Foundation Phase should be provided to equip teachers with sufficient knowledge when having to plan for learners with reading difficulties in their classrooms. Adopting a flexible approach will give teachers the opportunity to adapt the support they give and be responsive to diverse reading needs of specific learners in their classrooms.
- The DBE should train LSTs who will specialize in support for learners with reading difficulties.
- Teachers should be provided with the curriculum policies, such as the CAPS policy document and guidelines for responding to learners' diverse learning needs.
- More time should be allocated to reading in the Foundation Phase.
- More classrooms should be built at schools to allow an acceptable teacher: learner ratio in the Foundation Phase.

#### **5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

There were number of limitations that must be acknowledged:

The study was limited to schools in rural areas in Magakala Cluster. The researcher was limited to observe teachers in their classrooms owing to COVID-19 pandemic. Owing to COVID-19 regulations, the researcher was struggling to get participants because the participants were telephonically interviewed. Therefore, network was a problem, as well as load shedding. Besides that, the Limpopo Department of Education in Sekhukhune District had allowed me to conduct the research during breaks, after schools only, I was struggling to get some of the teachers who are travelling every day to their homes. Only five primary schools were selected mainly because some participants, were unwilling to share information and took time to respond, therefore, causing delay for researcher to finish in time.

The research was preferred to Foundation Phase teachers because research indicates that support for learners with reading difficulties are observed and experienced in that phase.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. Based on the findings of how teachers support learners with reading difficulties, the literature reviewed, the aims and the objectives of the study were met. From the data collected, it became evident in this study that to enhance support for learners with reading difficulties. Moreover, there is a need to align the current teacher training offerings with the current ICT needs of the learners in the Foundation Phase.

Teamwork among teachers is also an important factor that is needed to support reading in the Foundation Phase. In addition, collaboration between teachers, parents, district officials, and the DBE is another important factor that will determine the success of Foundation Phase teachers in supporting reading. The findings revealed that Foundation Phase teachers used different strategies and methods to support learners with reading difficulties. However, gaps which contributed towards the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the support for learners with reading difficulties have been identified in this study. These factors caused Foundation Phase teachers to be frustrated and unable to provide maximum support to learners with reading difficulties.

Support for learners with reading difficulties in Foundation Phase require teachers to be equipped with new teaching strategies and methods. As a result, the study concludes that the DBE should also offer training that aligns to the current teacher needs in the Foundation Phase. Furthermore, Foundation Phase teachers should also attend such workshops without failure so that they can be able to integrate current teaching strategies when they teach reading. Foundation Phase teachers should also register with institutions for higher learning so to improve their

Professional expertise so that they can be able to support learners with diverse needs. Lastly, if Foundation Phase teachers can work together with other stakeholders and ICT tools provided to teachers and learners in the Foundation Phase, support for learners with reading difficulties could be successfully improved and ultimately benefit learners with reading difficulties.

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## APPENDICES: A

### APPENDIX A: UNISA ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

  
UNISA | university of south africa

**UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Date: 2020/09/09

Dear Mrs RC MAKONKO

**Decision:** Ethics Approval from  
2020/09/09 to 2023/09/09

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mrs RC MAKONKO  
E-mail address: 36684570@mylife.unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: 082803 2353

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Dr HR Maapola-Thobejane  
E-mail address: maapohr@unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: 0124712771

**Title of research:**  
**Support for learners with reading difficulties in the foundation phase of Magakala Circuit**

**Qualification:** MEd Inclusive Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2020/09/09 to 2023/09/09.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2020/09/09 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.




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3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2023/09/09**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

**Note:**

The reference number **2020/09/09/36684570/01/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



**Prof AT Motihabane**  
**CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC**  
 motihat@unisa.ac.za



**Prof PM Sebata**  
**EXECUTIVE DEAN**  
 Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za

## APPENDIX B: LIMPOPO APPROVAL LETTER



**LIMPOPO**  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**  
SEKHUKHUNE EAST DISTRICT

REF: 2/2/4    Enq: Langa SI    Tel: 013 231 0100    DATE: 06/10/2020

TO: THE PRINCIPAL  
FROM: DISTRICT DIRECTOR  
SEKHUKHUNE EAST DISTRICT

**SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS WITHIN THE  
SEKHUKHUNE EAST DISTRICT**

1. The above matter has refers.


Kindly be informed that REBIDITSWE CAROLINE MAKONKO who is studying towards master of education degree at the University of South Africa (UNISA) is granted a permission to conduct a research at your school.

2. Condition attached to permission are:

- . Participation is voluntary
- . Information collected will only be used for study and remain confidential
- . No names should be written on questionnaire
- . Participants are free to withdraw anytime during the process

**NB: DATA COLLECTED AND ADMINISTRATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE MUST BE  
DONE ONLY DURING BREAKS AND AFTER TEACHING HOURS**

3. The district Director wishes you well as you continue to assist her.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**MAKOLA M.S**  
DISTRICT DIRECTOR

\_\_\_\_\_  
**6/10/2020**  
DATE

Permission to conduct research in Schools within Sekhukhune East District  
83 Aloe Street, 2314 Extension4, Aloe Ridge West, BURGERSFORT, 1150, P/Bag X 9041, BURGERSFORT,  
1150

***The heartland of Southern Africa-development is about people!!!***

## Appendix C: Request Permission to Circuit Manager

This letter will be given to each circuit under Magakala cluster.

**REQUEST FOR A PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT MAGAKALA CIRCUIT IN SEKHUKHUNE EAST (LIMPOPO) FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.**

**Title: SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH READNG DIFFICULTIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE OF MAGAKALA CIRCUIT**

The Circuit Manager

BURGERSFORT

1150

DATE: 09 October 2020

Dear Sir/ Madam

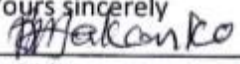
I, **REBIDITSWE CAROLINE MAKONKO**, I am doing research under the supervision of **Dr Maapola-Thobejane HR, a senior Lecturer in the Department of Inclusive Education towards** a Master of Education Degree (M Ed) at the University South Africa. I have funding from UNISA to conduct my Research. We are inviting you to participate in my study entitled: **SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE OF MAGAKALA CIRCUIT.**

The aim and the objective of the study is to explore how teachers support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. To explain teachers understanding of support for learners with reading difficulties. To describe strategies that teachers use to support learners with reading difficulties. To describe methods that could be used to enhance the support for learners with reading difficulties. Your District has been chosen because it is responsible for regulation activities in schools.

I will use interviews and document analysis to collect data from Foundation Phase teachers in Primary Schools. A total number of 5 Primary Schools teachers will participate in the study. The benefits of this study are to recognise and share the

best practices for support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. There are no anticipated risks or discomforts resulting from the research participants involved in this study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

The feedback procedure will entail a published research thesis and a peer-reviewed article as per University of South Africa (UNISA) regulations. There are no potential risks, as I will ensure confidentiality and privacy. Findings will be reported anonymously.

Yours sincerely  
 signature  
Rebiditswe Caroline Makonko  
UNISA M Ed Student

#### Appendix D: Request Permission to Principal of Schools

This letter will be given to each principal.

**REQUEST FOR A PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT  
\_\_\_\_\_Primary School.**

**Title: SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH READNG DIFFICULTIES IN THE  
FOUNDATION PHASE OF MAGAKALA CIRCUIT**

The principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

09 October 2020

Dear Sir/ Madam

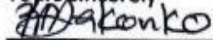
I, **REBIDITSWE CAROLINE MAKONKO**, I am doing research under the supervision of **Dr Maapola-Thobejane HR, a Lecturer in the Department of Inclusive Education towards** a Master of Education Degree (M Ed) at the University South Africa. I have funding from UNISA to conduct my Research. We are inviting you to participate in my study entitled: **SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE OF MAGAKALA CIRCUIT.**

The aim and the objective of the study is to explore how teachers support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. To explain teachers understanding of support for learners with reading difficulties. To describe strategies that teachers use to support learners with reading difficulties. To describe methods that could be used to enhance the support for learners with reading difficulties. Your District has been chosen because it is responsible for regulation activities in schools.

I will use telephonic interviews and document analysis to collect data from Foundation Phase teachers in Primary Schools. A total number of 15 Primary Schools teachers will participate in the study. The benefits of this study are to recognise and share the best practices for support learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase. There are no anticipated risks or discomforts resulting from the research participants involved in this study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

The feedback procedure will entail a published research thesis and a peer-reviewed article as per University of South Africa (UNISA) regulations. There are no potential risks, as I will ensure confidentiality and privacy. Findings will be reported anonymously.

Yours sincerely



signature

Rebiditswe Caroline Makonko

UNISA M Ed Student



## **APPENDIX E: TEACHERS' REQUEST LETTER**

This letter will be given to each of the 15 participants

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

**Date: 09 OCTOBER 2020**

**Title: SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE OF MAGAKALA CIRCUIT**

#### **DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT**

My name is **Rebiditswe Caroline Makonko** and I am doing research under the supervision of **Dr Maapola-Thobejane Hlabathi**, a senior lecturer in the Department of Inclusive Education towards a M Ed at the University of South Africa. We have funding from UNISA Masters by Dissertation and Doctoral for conducting research in Support for learners with reading difficulties. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: **SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE OF MAGAKALA CIRCUIT**

You are being requested to participate in the study because you have been teaching reading in the Foundation Phase and are currently working with learners with different abilities. You are among the 15 participants.

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. The potential benefits of taking part in this study is that it will broaden your knowledge as a professional and it will also give you opportunity to learn and grow. This will also benefit the type of learners you are working with as more could be done for them. Furthermore, the possible benefits are to assist you to establish strategies and a method to enhance support for learners with reading difficulties.

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number, or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. Note that a report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet at my office at home for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. If there is need for information to be destroyed, hard copies will be shredded and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer using a relevant software programme.

There will be no payment or incentive for participating in this study.

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the CEDU at UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

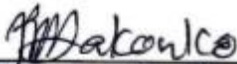
If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Rebiditswe Caroline Makonko or email [carolinemakonko@gmail.com](mailto:carolinemakonko@gmail.com). The findings are accessible for October 2020.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Rebiditswe Caroline Makonko on 0828032353.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, please contact **Dr Maapola-Thobejane HR** [maapohr@unisa.ac.za](mailto:maapohr@unisa.ac.za).

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Rebiditswe Caroline Makonko**  
**M Ed Student**

## APPENDIX F: TEACHERS' CONSENT REPLY SLIP

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participants name), confirm that the person asking for my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconvenience of participation

The researcher explained to me, and I understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and /conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement

\_\_\_\_\_

Participants signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Researcher' Name & Surname :REBIDITSWE CAROLINE MAKO ( M Ed Student)

Researcher's signature *Rebidswe Makoko* Date \_\_\_\_\_

9

OCTOBER 2020

## **APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What is your understanding of support for learners with reading difficulties?
2. Which strategies and methods do you use in your classroom to support learners?
3. Which methods can be used to enhance support for learners with reading difficulties in Foundation Phase?
4. Using your knowledge and experience how can you explain Foundation Phase learners about how they learn to read?
5. Can you briefly explain, how do you plan for support to accommodate learners with reading difficulties?
6. During support, what do you expect them to have mastered in terms of reading?
7. What helps you to implement support for learners with reading difficulties?
8. How do you identify learners with reading difficulties?
9. Which methods can you use to enhance support for learners with reading difficulties in the Foundation Phase?
10. What is the role played by a Learner Support Teachers (LSTs or SBST when a learner is unable to cope at your school? Briefly explain?
11. During your training as a teacher, were you trained on how to support learners with reading difficulties? Can you explain?
12. What challenges do you experience when you support learners with reading difficulties?

## APPENDIX H: EXAMPLE OF CLASSROOM TIME-TABLE

TIME	MONDAY	Length	TUESDAY	Length	WEDNESDAY	Length	THURSDAY	Length	FRIDAY	Length
08:00-08:30	<b>E- FAL</b> Daily activity Shared reading Phonics	<b>15min</b> <b>10min</b> <b>5min</b>	<b>E- FAL</b> Daily activity Shared reading Phonics	<b>15min</b> <b>10min</b> <b>5min</b>	<b>MATHS</b> Counting Recall str. Corrections/ Homework	<b>5min</b> <b>10min</b> <b>15min</b>	<b>E- FAL</b> Daily activity Shared reading writing	<b>15min</b> <b>15min</b> <b>15min</b>	<b>E-FAL</b> Daily activity Shared reading phonics	<b>15min</b> <b>15min</b> <b>5min</b>
08:30-09:00	<b>HOME LANG</b> Oral activity Phonics G. Reading 1	<b>15min</b> <b>15min</b>	<b>MATHS</b> Counting Recall strategy Homework/ corrections	<b>5min</b> <b>10min</b> <b>15min</b>	<b>MATHS</b> Lesson content	<b>30 min</b>	<b>MATHS</b> Counting Recall strategy Corrections/ Reflection	<b>5min</b> <b>10min</b> <b>15min</b>	<b>HOME LANG</b> Oral Phonics Group 7	<b>15min</b> <b>15min</b>
09:00-09:30	<b>HOME LANG</b> Handwriting	<b>30min</b>	<b>MATHS</b> Lesson content	<b>30 min</b>	<b>MATHS</b> Classwork Homework	<b>25 min</b> <b>5 min</b>	<b>MATHS</b> Lesson content	<b>30min</b>	<b>HOME LANG</b> Writing Group guided	<b>15min</b>
<b>09:30-10:00</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>R</b>		<b>E</b>	<b>A</b>				<b>K</b>	
10:00-10:30	<b>HOME LANG</b> G. Reading 2 Shared reading	<b>15min</b> <b>15min</b>	<b>MATHS</b> Classwork Homework	<b>25min</b> <b>5min</b>	<b>EFAL</b> Daily activity Shared reading phonics	<b>15min</b> <b>15min</b> <b>5min</b>	<b>MATHS</b> Classwork Homework	<b>25min</b> <b>5min</b>	<b>HOME LANG</b> Listening & speaking	<b>15 min</b> <b>15min</b>

10:30-11:00	<b>MATHS</b> Counting Recall strategies Homework /corrections	5min <b>10min</b>  <b>15min</b>	<b>HOME LANG</b> Oral activity Phonics  Group 3 reading	5min <b>15min</b>  <b>15min</b>	<b>HOME LANG</b> Oral Phonics Group reading	5min <b>15min</b> <b>15min</b>	<b>HOME LANG</b> Oral activity Phonics Group 6	15min  <b>15min</b>	<b>MATHS</b> Counting Recall/strate Correctio n/HW	5min <b>10min</b>  <b>15min</b>
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11:00-11:30	<b>MATHS</b> LESSON CONTENT	30min	<b>HOME LANG</b> Writing Group reading 4	15 min  <b>15 min</b>	<b>HOME LANG</b> Handwriting	30 min	<b>HOME LANG</b> Writing Group reading	15 min  <b>15 min</b>	<b>MATHS</b> LESSON CONT	30 Min
12:00	<b>MATHS</b> CLAW/HW	25min <b>5min</b>	<b>HOME LANG</b> Shared Reading	15 min	<b>HOME LANG</b> Group guided Shared reading	15 min  15 min	<b>HOME LANG</b> Listenin g& speakin g	5min  25min	<b>MATHS</b> Class/ HW	25m  in 5mi n
12:00-12:10	<b>S</b>	H	O	R	T	B	R	E	A	K
12:10-12:40	<b>LIFE-SKILLS</b> B/K SW	30 min	<b>LIFE SKILLS</b> B/KSW	30 min	<b>LIFE-SKILLS</b> PE	30 Min	<b>LIFE SKILL</b> B/KSW	30 Min	<b>LIFE SKILLS</b> CREATIV E	30min
13:10-13:40	<b>L</b> <b>SKILLS</b> CREATIVEART	30 min	<b>CREATIVE</b>	30 min	<b>LIFE-SKILLS</b> PE	30Min	<b>LIFE-SKILLS</b> CREATI VE	30min	<b>LIFE-SKILLS</b> B/KSW	30min

## APPENDIX I: ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR SOUNDS, SYLLABLES AND WORDS

Mantšu

Leina															
	leino	bona	nawa	meno	sega	tima	bana	noga	pipa	gega	saga	rema	rata	tonya	kiba
	leino	bona	nawa	meno	sega	tima	bana	noga	pipa	gega	saga	rema	rata	tonya	kiba
	leino	bona	nawa	meno	sega	tima	bana	noga	pipa	gega	saga	rema	rata	tonya	kiba
	leino	bona	nawa	meno	sega	tima	bana	noga	pipa	gega	saga	rema	rata	tonya	kiba
	leino	bona	nawa	meno	sega	tima	bana	noga	pipa	gega	saga	rema	rata	tonya	kiba
	leino	bona	nawa	meno	sega	tima	bana	noga	pipa	gega	saga	rema	rata	tonya	kiba

Leina															
	le	bo	na	me	se	ti	ba	no	pi	ge	sa	re	ra	to	ki
	le	bo	na	me	se	ti	ba	no	pi	ge	sa	re	ra	to	ki
	le	bo	na	me	se	ti	ba	no	pi	ge	sa	re	ra	to	ki
	le	bo	na	me	se	ti	ba	no	pi	ge	sa	re	ra	to	ki
	le	bo	na	me	se	ti	ba	no	pi	ge	sa	re	ra	to	ki
	le	bo	na	me	se	ti	ba	no	pi	ge	sa	re	ra	to	ki
	le	bo	na	me	se	ti	ba	no	pi	ge	sa	re	ra	to	ki

Leina																				
1.	b	e	m	a	r	k	l	a	n	e	p	o	s	i	b	m	t	g	o	s
2.	b	e	m	a	r	k	l	a	n	e	p	o	s	i	b	m	t	g	o	s
3.	b	e	m	a	r	k	l	a	n	e	p	o	s	i	b	m	t	g	o	s
4.	b	e	m	a	r	k	l	a	n	e	p	o	s	i	b	m	t	g	o	s
5.	b	e	m	a	r	k	l	a	n	e	p	o	s	i	b	m	t	g	o	s
6.	b	e	m	a	r	k	l	a	n	e	p	o	s	i	b	m	t	g	o	s
7.	b	e	m	a	r	k	l	a	n	e	p	o	s	i	b	m	t	g	o	s
8.	b	e	m	a	r	r	l	a	n	e	p	o	s	i	b	m	t	g	o	s



## APPENDIX J: RUBRIC FOR READING ALOUD

### ADJUDICATION TOOL: READING ALOUD WITH UNDERSTANDING

NAME OF LEARNER \_\_\_\_\_

LOLT \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF CIRCUIT \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CRITERIA	1	2	3	4	5
Posture, correct holding of the book and paging	1 Cannot hold and page the book correctly and is covering his/her face	2 Can hold the book correctly but cannot page it correctly and covering his/her face	3 Can hold and page the book correctly but covering his/her face	4 Can hold and page the book correctly and not covering his/her face	5 Can hold and page the book expertly and not covering his/her face
Fluency	1 Struggles to read, read hesitantly and without understanding	2 Reads word for word in text and has no phonic decoding skills	3 Can read simple words but struggles with complex words	4 Reads fairly, fluently and uses phonic decoding skills	5 Reads the whole text fluently, without hesitation
Pronunciation	1 Most words not clearly expressed	2 Some words not clearly expressed	3 Most words are clearly articulated	4 All words are clearly articulated	5 All words are well articulated
Intonation, stress and pause	1 Pauses unnecessarily	2 Sometimes pauses unnecessarily	3 Tries to pause correctly but does not change tone of voice	4 Pause correctly and changes tone of voice	5 Pauses and emphasizes where necessary, tone of voice goes with the text
Confidence and Audibility	1 Shouting and lacks confidence	2 Demonstrates little confidence	3 Audible but shows little confidence	4 Audible and demonstrates confidence	5 Remarkable confidence and effective audience rapport
Comprehension of unfamiliar text	1 Cannot answer questions	2 Answers 1 question and not in full sentence	3 Answers some questions but not in full sentence	4 Answers all questions but not using full sentences	5 Answers all questions in full sentences

Comments:

Adjudicator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX K: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

### EDITING AND PROOFREADING CERTIFICATE

7542 Galangal Street

Lotus Gardens

Pretoria

0008

21 August 2022

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This certificate serves to confirm that I have language edited RC Makonko's dissertation entitled, **"SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES IN FOUNDATION PHASE IN MAGAKALA CIRCUIT."**

I found the work easy and intriguing to read. Much of my editing basically dealt with obstructionist technical aspects of language, which could have otherwise compromised smooth reading as well as the sense of the information being conveyed. I hope that the work will be found to be of an acceptable standard. I am a member of Professional Editors' Guild.

Hereunder are my contact details:



Dr Jack Chokwe (PhD)

Contact numbers: 072 214 5489

[jackchokwe@gmail.com](mailto:jackchokwe@gmail.com)

Professional  
**EDITORS**  
Guild

**Jack Chokwe**  
Associate Member


Membership number: CH0001  
Membership year: March 2022 to February 2023

076 471 6881 / 072 214 5489  
012 429 3327  
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[www.editors.org.za](http://www.editors.org.za)



## APPENDIX L: Turnitin Digital Receipt



### Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author:	Rebiditswe Caroline Makonko
Assignment title:	Complete dissertation/thesis for examination
Submission title:	DISSERTATION FOR EXAM
File name:	CHAPTER_1_TURNITIN_CORRECTIONS_2.docx_2_CORRECTION...
File size:	389.57K
Page count:	113
Word count:	31,966
Character count:	178,026
Submission date:	10-Dec-2022 04:41PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID:	1889561981

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Reading skills are expected to underpin all the critical tasks of learning. It is expected of the learner to make reading fluency and comprehension skills an integral part of the learning process (Mokhele, 2017). However, there is evidence that learners who finish their primary school learning struggle to read. Learners are being made to progress to the Intermediate Phase without having gained the knowledge and skill to read properly. They never get to gain any reading skills. Hence, they struggle to progress to the higher grades (Mokhele, 2017).

In South Africa the National Policy for Promotion requires that learners be adequately prepared without meeting the minimum promotion requirements as this should not be achieved for longer than four years in the same class (DSE, 2014:6). There is an indication that learners with reading difficulties are not adequately supported. Additionally, the report on the 2014 Annual National Assessment (ANA) results highlights that the DSE acknowledges that Foundation Phase learners struggle to respond to questions and learners are unable to interpret questions or give answers when required (DSE, 2014:10). Hence the need to establish ways of addressing the problem. This report focuses on how to support learners with reading difficulties within the Foundation Phase under the Department of Education (DoE).

Moreover, the South African education system has policies and legislation that provide support for learners. This policy complies with the SASSA (2010), SASSA (2014), National Reading Strategy, NRS (2008) and NCS (2014). The introduction of an inclusive education system in the country was meant to support all learners experiencing reading challenges in mainstream schools that are within their needs (DSE, 2014: 14).

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