

**EXPLORING THE STRATEGIES USED FOR TEACHING CREATIVE
WRITING SKILLS IN GRADE 3: A CASE OF TWO NAMIBIAN
SCHOOLS**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that “Exploring the strategies used for teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3: The case of two Namibian schools” is my own work and that all the sources that I have cited or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references. I further declare that I submitted the thesis/dissertation to the appropriate originality detection system which is endorsed by Unisa and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. van der Merwe', is centered within a white rectangular box.

Signature

1 August 2023

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to every teacher who strives to make a difference.

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Matthew 19:26 ...but with God all things are possible.

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EXPLORING THE STRATEGIES USED FOR TEACHING CREATIVE WRITING SKILLS IN GRADE 3: A CASE OF TWO NAMIBIAN SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

Learners who do not master creative writing skills, risk possible failure because they cannot complete written assignments on time. In addition, writing is complex and requires thorough planning and problem solving. Research emphasises that those who struggle to write tend to remain behind; however, teachers find it challenging to teach writing effectively. The purpose of this research was to explore teachers' perspectives on the strategies used for teaching creative writing in Grade 3. The study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach, which used an exploratory case study design to obtain rich information from the participants. Purposive sampling was employed to recruit six Grade 3 teachers from two selected primary schools. Focus group interviews, classroom observations and document analysis were used to generate data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. The data revealed that teachers believed to be inadequately trained to teach creative writing effectively and they did not feel confident to teach it. The findings suggest that teachers believe they have little time to explore the use of evidence-based strategies. Their lack of diverse strategies influences the teaching of creative writing and its outcomes. The study proposes the development of an explicit writing curriculum and training therein so that the implemented curriculum is aligned with the intended curriculum, which currently is not the case in writing.

Key-words: Creative writing, Curriculum implementation, Self-regulation, Strategies, Teaching, Writing skills.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CPD	:	Continuous Professional Development
CPDP	:	Continuous Professional Development Programme
EBT	:	Evidence-Based Teaching
ECE	:	Early Childhood Education
ECD	:	Early Childhood Development
ESD	:	Education for Sustainability
JP	:	Junior Primary
MKO	:	More Knowledgeable Other
MoE	:	Ministry of Education
NIED	:	National Institute for Educational Development
PLC	:	Professional Learning Community
SRSD	:	Self-Regulated Strategy Development
SDGs	:	Sustainability Development Goals

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1	1
THE INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	2
1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	4
1.3.1 <i>Research question</i>	5
1.3.2 <i>Sub-questions</i>	5
1.3.3 <i>Research objectives</i>	5
1.4 MOTIVATION TO CONDUCT THIS STUDY	6
1.5 SYNOPSIS OF LITERATURE REVIEW	7
1.5.1 An overview of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Basic Education in Namibia	7
1.5.2 Emergent literacy skills	9
1.5.3 Writing in early grades	10
1.5.4 Creative writing	11
1.5.5 Framework of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)	13
1.5.6 Creating a Professional Learning Community (PLC)	14
1.5.7 Research-based approaches to teach writing	15
1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	16
1.6.1 Theoretical perspectives on learning	16
1.6.2 The Sociocultural Theory	17
1.6.3 Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura)	18
1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS	20
1.7.1 Emergent literacy	20
1.7.2 Early Childhood Development (ECD)	21
1.7.3 Creative writing	21
1.7.4 Handwriting	21
1.7.5 Independent writing	21
1.7.6 Writing vocabulary	21
1.7.7 Oral language skills	21
1.7.8 Phonemic awareness	21
1.7.9 Professional Learning Community (PLC)	22
1.8 SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH	22

1.8.1	Contribution to the body of knowledge	22
1.8.2	Contribution to the continuous professional development of teachers...	22
1.8.3	Contribution to JP teaching approaches.....	22
1.9	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN	23
1.9.1	Research Design	25
1.9.2	Site selection	26
1.9.3	Sampling.....	26
1.9.4	Data collection techniques	27
1.9.5	Data analysis and interpretation	29
1.9.5.1	Reflexive thematic analysis.....	30
1.10	CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS.....	32
1.11	RESEARCH ETHICS	33
1.12	LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS OF THE RESEARCH	34
1.12.1	Limitations	34
1.12.2	Assumptions.....	34
1.13	THESIS OVERVIEW	35
1.14	CHAPTER SUMMARY	36
CHAPTER 2	.....	38
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	.....	38
2.1	INTRODUCTION	38
2.2	THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES.....	38
2.2.1	Sociocultural theory	39
2.2.1.2	More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)	41
2.2.1.3	The role of the MKO in teaching creative writing	42
2.2.1.3	Internalisation	42
2.2.2	Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986)	43
2.2.3	Language development	45
2.2.4	Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)	46
2.3	VYGOTSKY AND BANDURA AND THE SELF-REGULATED STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT (SRSD)	48
2.4	CHAPTER SUMMARY	49
CHAPTER 3	.....	51
LITERATURE REVIEW	.....	51
3.1	INTRODUCTION	51
3.2	A LITERATURE MAP OF THE STUDY	51

3.3	TEACHING CREATIVE WRITING.....	53
3.3.1	Local and global perspectives	53
3.3.2	Why evidence-based research is so important	55
3.3.3	The SRSD approach to creative writing.....	56
3.3.4	Skills needed to develop creative writing	58
3.3.5	How knowledge is shared during the creative writing lesson.....	60
3.4	THE PROCESS OF CREATIVE WRITING IN EARLY GRADES	63
3.5	CHAPTER SUMMARY	65
CHAPTER 4	.....	66
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN	.....	66
4.1	INTRODUCTION	66
4.2	RESEARCH PARADIGM	67
4.2.1.	Philosophy	67
4.2.2.	Ontology	69
4.2.3	Epistemology	70
4.2.4.	Postpositivism	70
4.2.5	Pragmatism	71
4.2.6	Constructivism/Interpretivism paradigm.....	71
4.3	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH	74
4.4	RESEARCH DESIGN: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY	75
4.5	SITE SELECTION AND SAMPLING	75
4.5.1.	Research sites	75
4.5.2	Sampling technique and participant selection	76
4.6	DATA COLLECTION	78
4.6.1	Observation	78
4.6.2	Document study.....	79
4.6.3	Focus interviews.....	79
4.7	DATA ANALYSIS	81
4.7.1	Document analysis	83
4.7.2.	Focus group interviews	84
4.7.3	Lesson observations.....	85
4.8	CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS.....	86
4.8.1	Researcher stance and reflexivity.....	86
4.8.2	Prolonged engagement in field or research site	87
4.8.3	Use of peer debriefing	88

4.8.4	Member checks/follow-up interview.....	88
4.8.5	Create an audit trail	88
4.8.6	Provision of thick descriptions	89
4.8.7	Triangulation.....	89
4.9	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	89
4.9.1	Permission.....	90
4.9.2	Informed consent.....	90
4.9.3	Confidentiality	91
4.9.4	Anonymity.....	91
4.9.5	Beneficence.....	92
4.10	CHAPTER SUMMARY	92
PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS		93
5.1	INTRODUCTION	93
	Research question:.....	93
	Sub-questions.....	94
5.2	Findings from the focus group interviews.....	96
5.2.1	Demographical information of participants	96
5.2.2	Themes	100
5.2.3	Discussion of findings from focused interviews	101
5.3	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE FOCUSED INTERVIEWS.....	115
5.4	FINDINGS FROM THE DOCUMENT ANALYSIS.....	115
5.4.1	Public Documents.....	115
5.4.1.1	Official documents from the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED).....	116
5.4.1.2	Discussion of public documents.....	119
5.4.2	Personal documents.....	121
5.4.2.1	Learner scripts	121
5.4.2.2	Discussion of personal documents	124
	Marking.....	124
	Types of activities	124
5.5	SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT STUDY	124
5.6	FINDINGS FROM THE CREATIVE WRITING LESSON OBSERVATIONS 125	
5.6.1	Lessons	125
	Lesson delivery and learner participation	125

Types of activities done by learners.....	126
Strategies used to teach creative writing	126
5.6.2 Board display.....	127
Strategies used to teach creative writing	127
5.7 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS FROM THE CREATIVE LESSON OBSERVATIONS	128
5.8 SUMMARY OF LESSON OBSERVATIONS	129
5.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY	129
CHAPTER 6.....	130
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	130
6.1 INTRODUCTION.....	130
Sub-questions.....	131
6.2 DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN FINDINGS	133
6.2.1 Findings regarding literature and theoretical framework.....	133
6.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH.....	141
6.3.1 The unique contribution made to the research area	141
6.3.2 Contribution to the body of knowledge	144
6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS	145
6.4.1 Recommendations for Practice.....	145
6.4.2 Recommendations for further research	147
6.4.3 Limitations	147
6.5 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY	148
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	150
APPENDICES.....	171
Appendix A: Ethical Clearance	171
Appendix B: Permission Letter: Executive Director: Khomas Region	173
Appendix D: Permission Letter to Conduct Research.....	178
Appendix F: Letter requesting permission from the Principals.....	184
Appendix G: Letter requesting permission from a Teacher.....	186
Appendix I: Learner Assent Forms	190
Appendix J: Interview Guide	191
Appendix M: SRSD Scoring Rubric: Opinion	197

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1	84
List of documents selected for analysis	84
Table 5.1	98
Demographic profile of teachers	98
Table 5.2	120
Participant responses	101
Table 5.3	101
Themes and sub-themes	101
Table 5.4	119
Policy documents containing creative writing information for teachers	119
Table 5.5	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Overview of document study	Error! Bookmark not defined.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	49
Reflexive thematic approach	31
Figure 2.1	52
Theoretical framework	52
Figure 3.1	31
Literature map	55
Figure 4.1	69
Researcher's personal paradigmatic layout	122
Figure 5.1	111
Screenshots from SRSD	113
Figure 5.2	128
Examples of learner scripts	128
Figure 5.3	130
Shared writing lesson board display	130

Figure 6.1	132
An overview of Chapter 6.....	132
Figure 6.2	145
Components of the proposed strategy to teach creative writing.....	145

CHAPTER 1

THE INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

“All children are authors” (Joubert, 2015, p. 156).

This chapter introduces a study that explored how creative writing was taught in Grade 3. Of particular interest are the strategies used to teach creative writing and how teacher perceptions and beliefs influence their decision making when teaching creative writing. The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) in Namibia reported on poor literacy skills in the junior primary phase in 2012. The report indicated in 2012, already the teachers lacked methodologies to develop literacy in the primary grades. In light of this, the report also made recommendations to improve literacy skills like providing teachers with the knowledge they needed, namely continuous professional development, capacity building and the use of diverse approaches and strategies (NIED, 2012). More than a decade later, these same issues remain pertinent (Van Wyk & Mostert, 2016; Shikalepo, 2020; Katukula, Set & Nyambe, 2023) and the poor reading and writing skills in Namibia remain in the spotlight. Not much research has been done on the teaching and learning of writing in comparison to all that was done for reading, although poor writing competencies are well documented (Julius & Hautemo, 2017; Woods, 2015; Wyatt-Smith & Hackson, 2016). In their investigation, Julius and Hautemo (2017) found that Grade 5 teachers regarded the unobtained objectives of the junior primary phase as part of the challenges they experience when teaching creative writing skills. It is known that several factors account for writing difficulty, including the approach to teaching. Seemingly, the current approaches in the junior primary phase are insufficient to obtain the learning outcomes and revisiting it could be beneficial. Therefore, this research intended to contribute significantly to the development of instruction strategies for creative writing skills.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In Namibia, the NIED (2012) report also indicated that teachers lack methodologies to develop literacy in the primary grades and made specific recommendations to improve literacy skills such as providing teachers with the knowledge they need.

In South Africa, alarming findings in the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) report showed a lack of sufficient writing practice, a lack of advancement in writing skills throughout grades and inconsistencies in writing instruction between different classes in the same grade (NEEDU, 2013:48-49). The report also mentions that the importance of extended writing seems to be undervalued by the primary phase teachers who provide little opportunity for writing, and when it does occur, the “gradient is so flat that the level is more often than not, already too low by Grade 3” (NEEDU, 2013, p. 49). Correspondingly, one can argue that the horizontal and vertical development of writing skills are in dire need of an intervention. Furthermore, this implies that when learners enter the upper primary phase, they have such a poor set of foundation skills that they remain below grade-appropriate levels of performance. Significantly, three facets of teacher knowledge were highlighted in the NEEDU (2013) report: subject knowledge, knowledge of the official curriculum and knowledge of how to teach the subject. These three areas in teacher knowledge are important to inform future endeavours. In addition to this, national and international tests like the Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS) and the (former) Annual National Assessments (ANAs) reveal how reading and writing is a challenge for a large number of South African students (Spaull, 2022).

In Australia, the National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (2018) report indicated that writing skills are deteriorating. A proper understanding of what writing skills development entails and strategies to teach it effectively may mitigate the hindrances. Mackenzie, Scull and Munsie (2013) raise concern about learners’ writing abilities as a worldwide issue and stress that it is imperative to learn more about the teaching of writing in the early years because children who do not master the skill find school very challenging. If they lag behind, it becomes difficult to breach that gap; it is therefore very important to ensure that effective strategies for teaching writing are implemented in the junior primary phase. Mackenzie, Scull and Bowles (2015) emphasise that those learners who master the

writing skill in the early grades remain good writers in the later grade. Therefore, it is essential to develop writing skills in the junior primary phase effectively.

Emergent literacy refers to children's knowledge of reading and writing skills before they learn how to read and write words. According to Puranik and Lonigan (2014), this terminology was generally used in research on reading. One of the best prognosticators of being successful at school and beyond is the extent to which a child develops in reading and writing (Rosario, Hogemann, Nuñez, Vallejo, Cunha, Rodriguez & Fuentes (2019).

The amount of writing required to get through a school day may become a huge challenge for the struggling young writer. The children who do not master writing, risk possible failure because they cannot complete writing assignments on time. Writing is an essential skill for communication, learning and self-expression and those who do not master it sufficiently suffer limited opportunities for education and employment (Graham, Bollinger, Booth, D'Aoust, MacArthur, McCutchen & Olinghouse, 2012). The way forward is to sharpen the essential skills needed to master writing by applying research-based methodologies to enhance the proper and effective teaching of writing in the early years of schooling.

The study sought to explore the strategies that can be used to equip teachers with knowledge of teaching creative writing in the early years of schooling and this ties in with continuous professional development; hence the exploration of a PLC (professional learning community). In Namibia, the Ministry of Education (MoE) developed the following three instruments to evaluate and improve education: The Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme; the National Standards and Performance Indicators; and the National Professional Standards for Teachers (Kayumbu, 2020). This national evaluation found that the professional development programmes of the NIED were unsuccessful. Additionally, the evaluation found that teachers were not acknowledged or engaged when their professional development needs were being discussed (Kayumbu, 2020). In an attempt to resolve this dilemma, the Continuous Professional Development Programme (CPDP) was initiated in the Namibian schooling system in 2012. The MoE (2012) commissioned the CPDP Unit of the University of Namibia (UNAM) to coordinate the implementation and management of CPDP activities at national level. However, the CPDP mandated the

MoE, the NIED and regional educational advisory services to implement all professional development programmes. Consequently, all fourteen regions in Namibia are to deliver these programmes to their schools. However, since the implementation of the CPDP in 2012, no assessment of this Continuous Professional Development Programme (CPDP) programme has been conducted to investigate its efficacy, and only a few teachers in the Oshana Region had satisfactory knowledge of it (Kayumbu, 2020). It is thus worthy to attempt some form of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to address the issues found in the upper primary to support the effective teaching of writing in the lower primary to enhance teaching/learning.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teachers are confronted with the ultimate obligation to address the serious challenges pertaining to poor writing skills in primary schools. Eight-year-olds have to spend 50% of their school day engaging in writing activities (Daffern et al. 2017). This can be a daunting task if the skill required to do the work is a skill not yet mastered and can lead to a lot of frustration. To mitigate learners' writing problems and address the lack of diverse strategies employed in creative writing instruction, there is a need to explore teacher perceptions and the efficacy of strategies used and evidence-based teaching (EBT). According to Mackenzie and Hemmings (2014), learners who struggle to write may be deprived of optimal learning. Therefore, it is crucial to find solutions to this matter.

Three main issues in writing instruction are emphasised namely, a lack of evidence-based writing strategies, too little time allocated to actual writing or teaching it, and teachers' lack of confidence to teach writing effectively Rietdijk et al. (2018). In addition to this, the call for providing teachers with the knowledge they need, namely continuous professional development, capacity building and the use of diverse approaches and strategies (NIED, 2012) are still unanswered. This is evident in other research done in Namibia (Van Wyk & Mostert, 2016; Shikalepo, 2020; Katukula, Set & Nyambe, 2023). All of these factors plus the complex nature of writing, seemingly influence teaching thereof negatively and challenge teachers who lack diverse methodologies. Creative writing does not receive due consideration in teaching time and is seemingly left on the back burner (Harward, Peterson, Korth, Wimmer, Wilcox, Morrison, Black, Simmerman & Pierce, 2014). Therefore, there is a necessity to incorporate research-based methods to improve the teaching of creative writing in the

early grades (McKeown, Brindle, Graham, Collins & Brown, 2016, (Rosario et al., 2019).

1.3.1 Research question

Against this background, the main research question was formulated as:

How effective are teaching strategies that are applied by teachers in teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3?

1.3.2 Sub-questions

In an attempt to address the main research question, the following sub-questions emerged:

1. What are teachers' perspectives on teaching creative writing in Grade 3?
2. What evidence-based strategies are used to teach creative writing in Grade 3?
3. What are teachers' perspectives on employing Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) in the teaching of creative writing skills in Grade 3?
4. How can creating a PLC within the school serve as an intervention/recommendation to improve current ways of teaching writing in Grade 3?

1.3.3 Research objectives

This study aimed to explore the teaching strategies employed by teachers in teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3.

The objectives of this study were:

- To explore teachers' perspectives on teaching creative writing in Grade 3.
- To explore methods that are used to teach creative writing in Grade 3.
- To investigate teachers' perspectives on employing Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) in the teaching of creative writing skills in Grade 3.
- To investigate what role a Professional Learning Community (PLC) may play as an intervention to improve current ways of teaching creative writing in Grade 3.

1.4 MOTIVATION TO CONDUCT THIS STUDY

Regular visits to primary schools are part of my job as a lecturer involved in the training of teachers. Student teachers would often discuss the challenges they experience when doing the teaching practice as part of their training. In these discussions, it came to light that when teaching creative writing, learners simply could not complete the writing activities from the syllabus. Student teachers thought that the writing skills of learners were not on par with what the curriculum aspired to. Apart from this observation, a group of teachers from two primary schools where I often visit students requested a workshop on creative writing. The identification of a possible problem with the creative writing skills of learners in the primary school thus came from two sources: the student teachers and the teachers. It highlighted a need to dig deeper and come up with a plan of action.

Research done in Namibia (Van Wyk & Mostert, 2016; Julius & Hautemo, 2017; Shikalepo, 2020; Katukula, Set & Nyambe, 2023) also emphasised poor writing skills and how some learners proceeded to the next grade without having mastered the requirements for the current grade.

Therefore, this research attempted to explore how teachers in the junior primary phase could use diverse strategies to teach creative writing effectively. It anticipated bringing about a focused intervention that would inform current methodologies in teaching and learning writing. Harris, Graham, Friedlander and Laud (2013) elucidate that most teachers blame poor training and subsequently admit to not applying science-based methods to teach creative writing in their classrooms. Most reports and recommendations (remain merely shelved documents and are not put into practice. In searching for research-based approaches to share with the student teachers, Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) (Harris et al. 2013; Limpo & Alves, 2013; Graham, 2019) stood out. Similarly, Rietdijk, Van Weijen, Janssen, Van Den Bergh and Rijlaarsdam (2018) highlighted that the success of SRSD has been well documented, based on its positive impact on writing skills, hence the conviction that SRSD deserves a trial run in the junior primary classroom. Consequently, in this research, the focus is on SRSD as a strategy to teach creative writing as it could be beneficial to learners in the junior primary and in this context, in Grade 3.

1.5 SYNOPSIS OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of compiling a literature review in this study is to synthesise and critically evaluate literature that deals with the teaching of creative writing in the early years of schooling. This section discusses an overview of early childhood education in Namibia, followed by emergent literacy and writing in the early years. Thereafter literature on the process of writing as well as research-based strategies to teach creative writing are explored.

1.5.1 An overview of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Basic Education in Namibia

In Namibia, Pre-Primary to Grade 3 is known as the junior primary phase and formal basic education is thus from Pre-Primary to A-levels (Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture, 2016:3). Previously, basic education meant that children would start school when they turn 7 years old, now children pre-primary is regarded as part of basic education. Therefore, renewed interest grew in Early childhood development (ECD) and what it encompasses. ECD is regarded as the process of development in which children (0–8 years old) learn to move, think, feel, and interact with objects and people in their environment at more complicated levels (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2017:8; Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture, 2017:5; Brown, McMullen & File, 2019; Ngololo, Kasanda & Van Rooy, 2022). For young children, the first years of life signify a critical timeframe which implies that when this period is neglected children's development suffers. Therefore, this time when they develop several skills which will support their adaptation, participation and interactions throughout life should be taken full advantage of. Certain settings and situations offer increased support for this process of early development (UNESCO, 2021:9). These settings refer among others to the learning environment, supportive communities and policies.

Kamara, Kasanda and Van Rooy (2018) point out that in Namibia, educational resources are unevenly distributed not only along racial lines but also against rural communities, which make up most of the population (54%). Although the Namibian authorities regard Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) as an essential foundation for an industrious and accountable population, the majority of ECD centres

are community-based or informal or unregistered (Kamara et al., 2018). IECD embraces a holistic view of how children develop cognitively, socially, emotionally and physically (Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture (2017:5). Although earlier models leaned towards regarding learners as passive recipients of knowledge, later research leaned towards regarding learners as active members of a learning environment who influence their environments as much as they are influenced by it (Sandberg & Norling, 2018; Puranik, Phillips, Lonigan & Gibson, 2018; Lynch & Soni, 2021). This ties in with the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky which positions education between an individual and culture and will be discussed later.

Basic education is subdivided into four phases: Junior Primary (Pre-Primary and Grades 1-3), Senior Primary (Grades 4-7), Junior Secondary (Grades 8-9), and Senior Secondary (Grades 10-12). After completing the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary (NSSCO) level at the end of Grade 11, learners have several options; they may choose to continue with either vocational education and training or with distance learning or seek employment. Learners who meet the prescribed requirements may proceed to Grade 12. In Grade 12, learners will take their subjects at Advanced Subsidiary Level, which is an admission requirement for enrolment at many universities in Southern Africa and abroad (NIED, 2016).

The Namibian constitution states that formal basic education is free and obligatory from the beginning of the school year when the child reaches the age of 7 until the last school day of the year when the child reaches the age of 16. In 2006, the Cabinet decided to hand over the accountability for pre-primary education from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare to the then Ministry of Education (NIED, 2016). Subsequently, a pre-primary school year for 5/6-year-olds became part of basic education. The policy document (NIED, 2016) furthermore outlines that sound early childhood development and pre-primary programmes provide a strong foundation for the primary school years that follow. It clearly highlights that admission for all children to pre-primary education promotes equity when learners enter primary education. In Grade 1, the first five weeks are allocated to a school readiness programme which follows a Whole Child approach (NIED, 2011). Language development is set out to develop phonological awareness, receptive skills, incidental skills and expressive skills. Thereafter, Grade 1 continues with the junior primary syllabus up to Grade 3.

Furthermore, the Namibian government strives to grow a literate community into a knowledge-based community where knowledge is constantly acquired and renewed, and used for creative innovation to improve quality of life (NIED, 2016:8). Therefore, this research on how to enhance creative writing instruction correlates with national, regional and school objectives.

1.5.2 Emergent literacy skills

In ECD programmes and interventions, the concept of emergent literacy skills is important. Emergent literacy refers to code and phonological skills, in other words, the development of language and concepts, especially as they begin to be linked together (Rohde, 2015,). Children pick up knowledge about reading and writing long before formal instruction and such knowledge manifests as emergent literacy. Given this, emergent literacy can be mediated to benefit learners, even in multilingual contexts (Lucas, Hood & Coyle, 2021). Several aspects are known to predict success with reading and writing within the first few years of schooling. For example, oral vocabulary, pre-reading skills and writing their own names may be then linked to successful mastering of early literacy. (Copping, Crammen, Gray & Tymms, 2016; Puranik & Lonigan, 2014). Transcription skills, such as spelling and the ability to record written messages in legible form (handwriting), at the beginning of formal schooling are linked to competence in writing in the early childhood years (Connelly, Dockrell, Walter & Critten, 2012). Likewise, oral language and phonemic awareness enhance writing vocabulary in the first year of school (Mackenzie & Hemmings, 2014).

Similarly, Mackenzie et al. (2015) point out that, whereas text structure, sentence structure and vocabulary empower the writers to compose their work, young writers are also required to be competent in the secretarial dimension of writing. These findings emphasise that writing is an intense and complex skill, hence more effort in diverse strategies and capacitating teachers could be advantageous. It is important to regard the home environment as the setting for important early literacy learning experiences which increase the possibility of mastering writing skills (Daffern, Mackenzie & Hemmings, 2017). It may be accepted that early childhood learning interventions before formal schooling can contribute to success with writing in the junior primary phase. Daffern et al. (2017) concur that the home environment is often

regarded as the setting for essential early literacy learning experiences which promotes the likelihood of success with writing in school. It is indeed a crucial period to enhance literacy skills optimally.

1.5.3 Writing in early grades

As stated by early researchers (Berninger & Richards, 2002; Levin, Both-de Vries, Aram & Bus (2005) writing starts with own name writing. Thereafter, writing develops with basic visual-motor integration at an early age, typified by scribbling and progressing to letters and words, after which orthographic skills advance. The automaticity of basic writing skills is crucial during the junior primary grades (Decker, Roberts, Roberts, Stafford & Eckert, 2016). It is crucial in the sense that if left behind, a young learner can experience a lot of pressure to keep up. As writing strategies and essay planning require working memory, they become more multifaceted and complex. For this reason, strategies like modelled writing and shared writing have the potential to be meaningfully applied during the early years. The reason for this is that modelled writing and shared writing provides an opportunity to plan the essay while not carrying the burden of coming up with own ideas. Moreover, as learners make progress in their writing skill development, they transfer from learning how to write to writing to learn during the third and fourth grades, learners (Decker et al. 2016). The writing skills have potential to be transferred to other spheres of learning, later in school life which makes it imperative to provide sound methodologies from early on.

Puranik & Lonigan (2014) found that before children can read and write, they must understand how printed language works. This implies that the young learners must have an understanding that the symbols they see on paper are graphemes that symbolise phonemes and words. Puranik & Lonigan (2018) further specify that young children indeed know much about written language before they begin school. This is because young children possess the ability to write letters of the alphabet and their names, and can spell CVC words. During writing development, more general features appear before language-specific features can be observed. These findings indicate that pre-school children's knowledge of writing and their writing-related skills increase and stabilise later (Puranik & Lonigan, 2011; 2014; 2018). Three distinct emergent

writing aspects, namely conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge and generative knowledge are identified (Puranik & Lonigan, 2014).

In support of this, Mackenzie et al. (2015) note that writing skills proved to be relatively constant, and this implies that those learners who master writing skills in the early years remain effective writers in the later years. Hence, it is important to maximise all efforts to lay a strong foundation for the development of writing skills. This is not only important in the progression of individual learners, but also in the progression of writing from one grade to the next. Furthermore, Kim & Park (2019) reiterate that in order to produce writing, ideas should be formed, interpreted as oral language and transcribed into written text. Quinn, Bingham & Gerde (2021) also emphasise that several elements (i.e., conceptual, procedural and generative skills) are required for children's early writing development.

1.5.4 Creative writing

Learning to write is a multifaceted process that involves cognitive, physical, social and cultural dimensions (Daffern et al. 2017). Daffern et al. (2017) also state that specific factors, at the beginning of formal schooling, are recognised to envisage creative writing skills achievement during the early grades. Therefore, it is important to enhance emergent literacy skills like oral vocabulary, pre-reading skills, and handwriting which are linked to successful writing (Copping et al., 2016; Puranik & Lonigan, 2014).

Graham et al. (2012) identify the components of the writing process as planning, drafting, sharing, evaluating, revising, and editing. An additional component, publishing, may be included to develop and share a final product. Mackenzie et al. (2015) explain writing as having a two-fold role: the authorial role which refers to the organisation of ideas and information to communicate with an audience and is influenced by oral language and vocabulary knowledge. The secretarial role of writing refers to the external features of the written text, focusing on spelling, handwriting and punctuation. Others refer to conceptual knowledge such as knowing that writing has a purpose and procedural knowledge which includes the alphabetic knowledge and the mechanics of letter and word writing and lastly, generative knowledge which is the child's ability to create meaningful sentences (Puranik & Lonigan, 2014).

Planning essays and engaging in creative writing activities demand working memory and cognitive input from learners. This implies that higher order thinking skills are developing as creative writing develops. Jones, Abbott & Berninger (2014) posit that learners in their third and fourth grades transform from acquiring the skill to writing in order to learn. Moreover, it means that as they write, they learn and cognitive development is enhanced. Writing tasks thus become more multifaceted and critical for learning. However, Hall (2019) contends that research on early writing instruction emphasises that every attempt to write fortifies a better understanding of phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge and print awareness, which are skills needed for reading and writing success. It strengthens the development of foundational early writing skills with regards to promoting higher-level composition competencies such as organising, planning, revising, legibility and speed. Therefore, to reach that desired level of higher order thinking skill development, more opportunities to engage in writing activities are required. In addition to this, cross-curricular, interdisciplinary creative writing opportunities may bring about more progress. There is a need to understand that creative writing practice makes high demands, yet through practice, much progress can be achieved; this elucidates the importance of ensuring meaningful, explicit teaching. Creative writing not only promotes higher order thinking but transferable skills are developed as well as self-expression.

In Namibia, all teaching is supposed to be done in a learner-centred manner. A learner-centred approach is embraced which regards the needs of the learner at the heart of what teachers do in classrooms instead of forcing learners to follow suit on whatever the teacher has determined (NIED, 2015:9). This implies that information, and skills and understanding of the subject matter must be used or discovered before learning can occur. The teacher is in charge of creating various exercises to assess the learner's prior knowledge of the subject. Then teachers create additional exercises that expand upon and deepen the understanding of the learners. All these guidelines are outlined in the National Policy Guide for the Junior Primary Phase, NIED, 2015).

The way things are intended to be happening in classrooms is not always the way they are implemented or executed. Often, the question arises whether what is done in class is reflecting a learner-centred approach or not. Du Plessis (2020) emphasises that learner-centred teaching is based on ideas such as active learning, learner

commitment and the creation of one's knowledge. The creation of one's knowledge, which is in line with the Namibian government's vision as well as global perspectives, is easily overlooked in most learner-centred lessons. To put it differently, to succeed in the rapidly changing and widely available information about current world, learners must not only master content but also how to learn more. It should give learners some influence over their learning processes, which motivates them (Du Plessis, 2020). Moreover, having more input in their own learning processes can develop self-regulation which can be transferred to other disciplines.

1.5.5 Framework of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) which is a matter of global importance is applied to inform this research. Since education is a fundamental human right and the cornerstone of, among others, fostering sustainable development, it is regarded as UNESCO's top priority. In 2015, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were launched (UNESCO, 2017). The SDGs are universal, applying to all countries and all sectors. Therefore, all research, policy and practice cannot omit the SDGs as such, and this research aimed to be acquiescent in this regard. Consequently, this research ties in with SDG 4 which is concerned with quality education and Target 4.7 specifically addresses ESD. ESD is a comprehensive and transformative approach to education that considers pedagogy, the learning environment, and the learning content and results. Furthermore, UNESCO (2017) outlines that ESD calls for a change from teaching to learning; an action-oriented, innovative approach to education that encourages problem solving, inter- and transdisciplinary, and the integration of formal and informal learning. It is important to note that the support of teachers remains a key prerequisite to the successful adoption and implementation of ESD (Giangrande, White, East, Jackson, Clarke & Saloff Coste, 2019). The support of teachers is therefore essential to ensure transformed learning environments and, in this research; transformed creative writing classrooms.

In this changing world where teachers constantly move between schools, regions, countries and continents, it is vital to equip them with the competence to create sustainable learning environments wherever they go. Sustainable learning environments are those where educators and learners employ sustainability principles in their daily practice (Müller, Hancock, Stricker & Wang, 2021).

ESD embraces the learner-centred approach, creativity, self-motivation, self-regulation, decision-making and problem-solving skills which all are part of sound writing practice. These approaches are not only central to enhancing writing instruction but it is also explicitly endorsed in the national curriculum documents as laid out in Table 5.1. On top of that, researchers contend that for ESD to become a significant aspect of high-quality education, emphasis on topic knowledge, teaching and assessment practices, as well as teacher professional development (Schudel, Songqwaru, Tshiningayamwe & Lotz-Sisitka, 2021:19) is vital. ESD is a way of thinking and acting for the future; it, therefore, makes sense to explore the strategies to teach creative writing effectively, not only preparing learners for higher learning but also for life.

1.5.6 Creating a Professional Learning Community (PLC)

As the problem is perceived to be with our teaching of writing strategies a PLC (professional learning community) can provide a focused effort to reflect on it and adapt it. A professional learning community (PLC) is intended to intensify pedagogical knowledge and to reassure alliance among teachers. Many researchers have recorded the benefits of creating and maintaining PLCs. Schools are using PLCs to boost teamwork and enhance teaching and learning (Karpen, 2015). Atta (2015) also describes PLCs as “comprehensive school reform to improve teachers’ knowledge, skills and instructional practice as well as students’ achievement during accountability periods.” Additionally, Tshiningayamwe (2016) emphasises that PLCs are groups of teachers who take charge of their own professional development cooperatively while developing a plan of action to boost their own growth.

Creating a PLC promotes teachers’ understanding of their pedagogical perspectives and the use of research-based methodologies when teaching creative writing to truly impact classroom practice. This requires a setting for teachers to reflect on pedagogical knowledge through an ongoing cycle of reflection, social collegial interaction, professional dialogue and all processes that can provide scaffolding for improved knowledge for teaching (Stoll et al. 2006; Atta, 2015; Tshiningayamwe, 2016; Schudel (2021)). The focus is thus on creating a PLC within the school to explore its potential to boost junior primary teachers’ knowledge of effective methods to teach creative writing in Grade 3.

1.5.7 Research-based approaches to teach writing

The teaching of literacy is shaped not only by the designed curriculum but also by the individuals' understanding of what literacy and learning encompasses and how to go about reaching their outcomes (Fischer, 2012). Understanding evidence-based methods is very important so that teachers and educators can apply impactful strategies during writing instruction lessons. Many researchers (Kim & Park, 2019; Graham, 2019; Quinn et al. 2020; Graham & Alves, 2021) highlight the need for applying research-based methods in schools.

Likewise, Georgiou, Mok, Fischer, Vermunt, and Seidel (2020) concur that the implementation of evidence-based teaching (EBT) practices aims to narrow the gap between research and practice. So, this research also explores research-based approaches to writing instruction. Research mostly observes the two prominent approaches in teaching writing, namely, the product-based approach and the process-based approach. However, there are also other approaches such as genre-based approaches and blended approaches like genre process and product process approaches which influence writing skills (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019).

In South- Africa, Ngubane, Ntombela and Govender (2020) recapitulate the commonly used approaches to teaching creative writing. The product approach implies that teachers present learners with a prototypical text to match to produce their own writing and the primary emphasis is on accuracy in writing. Whereas in a process approach, the focus of writing instruction is more on what is needed in writing and rewriting texts. However, the genre-based approach places special importance on the social context in which writing is produced. Ngubane et al. (2020) identify these commonly used methods, namely product, process and genre-based approaches.

In the Netherlands, the communicative writing approach is used which emphasises that language learning occurs optimally when learners engage in real, authentic communication (Rietdijk et al., 2018). Also, process writing is found as another approach used in Dutch classrooms and, lastly, the writing strategy instruction approach. The writing strategy instruction approach involves the explicit and systematic instruction of writing such as the Self-regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) model. The instructional order comprises six stages: develop and activate knowledge, discuss it, model it, memorise it, support it, and finally perform it

independently (Harris & Graham, 2009). Modelling the strategy sets this writing strategy instruction apart from others. Graham and Alves (2021) have confirmed SRSD to be a trustworthy approach to writing that withstood many tests and delivered significant results.

As learners write, they experience several stages such as pre-writing, writing, revising, editing and publishing as coined by (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Consistent with Flower and Hayes (1981), these stages permit learners to create ideas and revise and edit them before their final publication. Therefore, this scaffolding pedagogical approach is underpinned by both Vygotsky's (1978) social cultural theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory which includes the interactive classroom. In a collaborative classroom, the teacher intentionally draws back from the role of a very involved instructor and embraces the role of facilitator to ensure writing independence in learners is achieved.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.6.1 Theoretical perspectives on learning

All facets of existence are understood and explained by theories. Theories are also employed to refute conventional wisdom or beliefs. Researchers use theories to outline their research before they embark on the journey. when developing a perspective on a research topic (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015:35). Various theories are used to investigate research issues, and each theory has an impact on the method that researchers use to carry out their investigations. This section elaborates on the theories used to underpin this study, namely, social constructivism (Vygotsky 1978) as well as social cognitive theory (Bandura 1986). These are the theories employed to explore the efficacy of strategies in teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3. Both the social cognitive theory and the sociocultural theory are predicated on the notion that individuals and their environments are mutually interconnected (Eun, 2019). Therefore, these two theories were deemed suitable to frame this study to explore how effective creative writing teaching strategies are. Also, they were used to explore teacher perceptions of writing instruction and how professional development interventions and evidence-based methodologies can mitigate the challenges. As a result of such teacher development, the acquisition of diverse strategies and methodologies may lead to improved creative writing instruction and consequently

improved writing skill development. Furthermore, these theories also provide an understanding of how to bring about optimal learning. It highlights learning as a social and culturally embedded concept and embraces strategies like modelling, active learner participation, peer-tutoring, learner-centredness and self-regulation.

1.6.2 The Sociocultural Theory

The sociocultural theory of human development is comprehensive and encompasses an integration of cognitive, social, perceptual, motivational, physical, emotional, and other processes (Rogoff, 2003; Eun, 2019). This understanding of how cognition incorporates social interactions and cultural experience provided insight into teaching and learning. This viewpoint has changed our understanding of cognition from focusing just on the apparent individual's thoughts to focusing on the active processes of people, whether temporarily alone or in groups, as they participate in shared activities in cultural communities (Rogoff, 2003). This view places a strong emphasis on the idea that social interaction is the basis of higher order functions. Vygotsky contends that a study of the individual is insufficient to comprehend such an individual's development. The individual on his/her own did not reach the development by him/herself. In fact, it was through interaction with the environment and others. The importance of the external social environment that has shaped that person's development is echoed in Vygotsky's statement, "an author who puts down in writing the product of his creativity is by no means the sole creator of his work," Smagorinsky (2017). Therefore, the interaction between the social (external) and the individual (internal) brings forth learning.

The sociocultural theory proposes two important concepts, namely the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and the more knowledgeable other (MKO). According to Vygotsky, the ZPD refers to the learner's real or present degree of development or mastery as well as the next level that may be reached with the help of contextual cues, mediating semiotic devices, and skilled adult or peer facilitation. In case a learner experiences difficulty in completing a task, peers, adults or even devices support and guide them. The ZPD bridges the gap between learners' need for outside assistance from a more knowledgeable person and their incapacity to function independently, Panhwar, Ansari & Ansari (2016). The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) is normally thought of as being a more capable other, someone who has already mastered the

skill like a teacher, coach or older adult. However, the MKO could also be peers or a younger person and because this research focuses on the teacher's perspectives, it can also be another teacher or subject expert Panhwar et al. (2016).

According to Vygotsky, the role of the MKO is linked to scaffolding. Scaffolding refers to "the semiotic process" that enables an individual to find new meanings in their surroundings through interaction with objects, tools, and social people. This process causes the inter-mental plane to become internalised (intra-mental) to support the individual's cognitive needs (Eun, 2019). The implication of a cognitive function in a societal framework is that the stronger and better equipped such a societal framework is, the better and stronger the cognitive functioning.

Adults (the MKO) structure activities for the child so that, it gradually gains control over the activities that must be done. The mediator's role is that of scaffolding so that the learner can become independent. The adult helps the child by setting problems to be solved and then by providing clues to the solutions. With the help of the mediator or group, the learner is assisted in working out an individual and personal solution to the problem. Through discussions, mediation and negotiation, learners gain mastery. They discover for themselves and can therefore internalise new concepts and gain conscious control over their interactions. As mentioned earlier, the Self-Regulated Strategy Development instruction progresses as the learner progresses and learners are given ample opportunity to make these strategies their own. The Vygotskian perspective asserts that although the teacher's intervention in children's learning is needed, the quality of the teacher-learner interaction is crucial in the learning process. Vygotsky saw language as the most significant psychological instrument established in human history, not only because it reorganises the mind, provoking verbal thinking and creating new systemic qualities, but because it also leads to the essence of being human (Sawyer & Stetsenko, 2014). Teaching and learning are seen from the standpoint of social-cultural theory as an interactive, culturally sensitive process in which both teacher and learner play crucial roles.

1.6.3 Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura)

The social learning theory (Bandura, 1987) postulates that human behaviour is mostly shaped by ongoing interactions between behavioural, cognitive, and environmental

elements. Therefore, this implies that human behaviour is mostly learnt through observation and modelling.

Bandura (1991) asserts that continuous self-influence exercises, stimulates and governs human behaviour. Therefore, the individual who reflects regularly on their behaviour may become more driven and self-motivated to reach higher heights. Three main subfunctions make up the main self-regulatory system. These include affective self-reaction, evaluating one's behaviour in light of one's own standards and the circumstances of the environment, and self-monitoring of one's behaviour, its causes, and its consequences (Bandura, 1991). Bandura asserts that people inspire themselves and direct their behaviours in a proactive and anticipatory manner. However, setting aims and goals alone is insufficient; result anticipation determines the likely values that certain actions will produce. The most important concept in social cognitive theory, self-efficacy, is predicated on a self-belief system about one's abilities (Eun, 2019, Bandura,1991). Perception, attention, and memory are examples of cognitive processes that support belief in one's ability to carry out specific tasks. One's perception of their ability to reach a particular performance level is influenced by a variety of elements, including their knowledge and abilities, situational context, and cognitive interpretation of prior performances.

Most important is the factor that the existence of performance deterrents or dissuasion may cause people not to act on their knowledge and beliefs, even if they are competent and skilled (Eun, 2019). For this reason, it is so important that school management and regional support are in place to strengthen and foster self-development and professional development. Furthermore, Eun (2019) asserts that according to social cognitive theory, it is critical to choose one's own learning objectives rather than having others dictate them to you. Consequently, interventions where teachers are part of the decision-making, involved in needs-assessment, and part of stakeholder meetings are interventions they are more likely to take ownership and engage in wholeheartedly. In the same way, self-regulated learning might support learners in developing their creative writing skills and support teachers in enhancing their current teaching strategies of creative writing when they set their own goals. Setting own goals and self-regulation is foundational to SRSD and is another reason why the social cognitive

theory ties in with this research. It is easier to increase efforts to reach one's personal goals and take ownership of aspiring to reach them, than goals that were dictated.

The social cognitive theory places a strong focus on cognitive processes in human-environment interactions, as its name suggests. The foundation of self-efficacy, the most significant concept in social cognitive theory, is a self-belief system about one's own abilities (Eun, 2019). According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy often predicts future behaviour more accurately than result from expectations. The hypothesis suggests additional performance limitations and disincentives that may prevent highly effective persons from using their knowledge and talents, even when self-efficacy beliefs are the best predictor of performance.

Teacher efficacy in the context of education refers to a teacher's belief or conviction that they can impact how well students learn (Eun, 2019). As the above description makes evident, teacher efficacy is fundamentally a perspective because it is a type of self-efficacy. It is predicated on the teacher's belief that he or she can bring about improvements in student learning. Teachers who have a strong sense of efficacy tend to be more patient and readier to stick with pupils who struggle with learning, which is consistent with the traits of an effective person (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). Such traits in teachers are highly desirable and are what every teacher educator hopes to inspire in their students. On top of this, it was found that skilled writers are those who have mastered self-regulated learning abilities such as self-set objectives and self-reinforcement, (Rosario et al. 2019). Hence, it is important to develop self-regulation in both teachers and learners.

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1.7.1 Emergent literacy

Emergent Literacy is a process involving the development of language and concepts, especially as they begin to be linked together. This begins at birth, long before any formal instruction in Braille or print. Communication and literacy are interrelated, and the expression and comprehension of ideas are an essential first step on the path to literacy. This may include listening and speaking, signing, using objects, pictures,

gestures or any combination of ways in which a child understands and interprets experiences.

1.7.2 Early Childhood Development (ECD)

ECD is regarded as the process of development in which children (0–8 years old) learn to move, think, feel, and interact with objects and people in their environment at more complicated levels (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2017:8).

1.7.3 Creative writing

The act of using print to express meaning or to compose a story or non-fiction piece of writing. It hones self-expression and develops higher order thinking as well as transferable skills.

1.7.4 Handwriting

Handwriting refers to a less complex strand of development, which involves developing fine motor skills necessary to create print forms such as alphabet letters. Composing and handwriting develop alongside each other in order for young children to bridge their oral and written worlds (Hall, 2019).

1.7.5 Independent writing

Independent writing is the practice of writing on one's own, converting concepts into text.

1.7.6 Writing vocabulary

Children's writing vocabulary is understood to be those words they know and can spell correctly.

1.7.7 Oral language skills

The ability to use words to communicate thoughts and views and to use language as a tool in communication.

1.7.8 Phonemic awareness

The understanding that spoken words can be separated and manipulated as minimally contrastive sound units (Mackenzie et al., 2015).

1.7.9 Professional Learning Community (PLC)

The literature defines a professional learning community (PLC) as a group of educators working collaboratively to acquire new knowledge to enhance success for all students (Blanton & Perez, 2011).

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH

1.8.1 Contribution to the body of knowledge

This research is significant because it describes perspectives on writing instruction that have the potential to benefit teaching and learning and it highlights the importance of research-based methods to teach writing. The information gathered from the focus group discussions indicated the concerns from the teachers that their theory and practice integration is not fully realised concerning their classroom practices. By implementing research-based methods such as the SRSD method in their classrooms, teachers experienced the practical application of what was stated by theory.

1.8.2 Contribution to the continuous professional development of teachers

This research is significant because, for the first time, an implementation plan for a collaborative structure in the form of a PLC is formulated to focus on improving writing instruction in the junior primary phase in a school in this region. This concept may be transferred to other focus areas in the junior primary grades. Teachers are introduced to creating and maintaining a functional PLC in order to address instructional practices to ensure that optimal learning occurs. In addition, this research does not only highlight the reality that cluster schools in Namibia do not really effectively embrace junior primary teachers who remain professionally isolated, but it also offers a possible solution to ensure the continuous professional development of teachers. The efficacy of a functional PLC is well-researched and can bring about much-needed change in classroom practice.

1.8.3 Contribution to JP teaching approaches

The results of this research are important as they may assist educators to re-assess the teaching strategies relating to writing skills in the early years of teaching and stress

the importance of embracing research-based methodologies through their practical application.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The study's main research paradigm or epistemology is interpretivism /constructivism. The study employs an exploratory case study design and thus data presented are in both narrative descriptions and tables. Furthermore, the interpretive constructivist perspective in qualitative research methods, and how these worldviews situated the study are discussed. Qualitative research is regarded as an interpretive investigation that is embedded in three essential parts namely, several particular data, and particular people in a particular environment (Christensen et al. 2015:68). The qualitative researcher therefore makes every effort during and after the data collection to make meaning of what they observe. The essence of this methodology is to understand the participants' perception of the phenomenon under investigation. Instead of aiming for objectivity, the researcher's perspective is valuable in interpreting data in this research approach (Haenssngen, 2019). The interpretivist focuses on gaining understanding via various kinds of subjective information to find answers to the research questions. Hence, this researcher aimed to gain insight into how creative writing was taught and what teacher perspectives on writing instruction entailed. Therefore, this qualitative research was embedded in an interpretivist approach which deals with understanding the social phenomena from the participants' views (Cooper & White, 2012; Haenssngen, 2019; Fouché, Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021). According to Cooper and White (2012), applying the same research methods and methodologies as applied in the natural sciences is futile in the social sciences. Besides, an interpretivist approach is embedded in the perspective that human beings cannot know how the world is. Therefore, a concentrated effort to understand the local context provides a more truthful depiction of what we are investigating (Cooper & White, 2012). How the world actually is, should be interpreted by how participants regard and value it (Fouché et al. 2021).

In this approach, the participants' perspectives on the teaching of writing skills were studied. Human engagements are influenced by the background and context in which they take place (Christensen et al. 2015; Haenssngen, 2019). The exemplar of qualitative research is founded on the social sciences which encompass the study of

people (Christensen et al. 2015; Haenssger, 2019). Qualitative research is therefore mainly based on the social roles, experiences and behaviour of people. The participants were studied to conceptualise an account of how writing instruction takes place in the classroom. Furthermore, Haenssger (2019) emphasises that a research design aims to find an effective way to acquire evidence in an attempt to find a solution to the problem which was identified. Information was collected by observing the context within which the phenomenon occurs. After and during the observation, the process was described in detail by engaging in dialogue with participants and constructing clarifications of what happened during writing instruction.

The qualitative researcher investigates a particular person, in their particular setting and therefore it was necessary to enter the Grade 3 classrooms to gain an optimal understanding of writing instruction methodologies. Creative writing lessons were observed, and notebooks were analysed to gain more understanding of the effectiveness of writing instruction strategies. Qualitative research deals with monitoring participants within their context to obtain insight into their world. Interpretation of what is perceived was based on the context; in other words, the research was centred on the qualitative researcher's certainty that human actions are rooted in the circumstances or settings in which they occur. Consequently, it would be challenging to understand how writing is taught without the context within which writing is taught.

The qualitative researcher is getting an insightful peek at the real situation from the participant's position (Babbie, 2016:287-288). Correspondingly, this research made every effort to analyse the qualitative nature of writing methodologies by closely observing the practices and insights of the participants. Teacher perceptions and beliefs regarding writing are very important as they impact writing instruction (Hall, Gao & Hirsch, 2021), and therefore the researcher hoped to gain a better understanding of it.

Thus, interpretivist/constructivist researchers often focus on the development of dealings among people. The researcher was determined to make sense of (or construe) the connotations and views others have of the world (Creswell, 2014).

Both the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative research methodologies that were applied in this research led to the decision to focus on this research by employing a case study.

1.9.1 Research Design

This research followed an exploratory case study research design, adopting an interpretivist approach which was deemed most suitable for this study. A case study design was selected in this research as a thorough investigation of the personal experiences of the research participants to explore current strategies of teaching creative writing in Grade 3.

Christensen et al. (2015:377) define a case study as “a concentrated and exhaustive account and analysis of one or more cases.” A case is considered a bounded system such as an individual, a group or even an incident where the system refers to the interrelationships among the elements comprising the case (Christensen et al., 2015:377). The research was therefore bounded by the specific case under investigation and does not aspire to gain knowledge on a wide-ranging social phenomenon. Hence, this research was focused on the particular phenomenon in question, namely strategies in teaching creative writing. Among the fundamental qualities of the case study is its use of a variety of sources to obtain information (Fouché et al., 2021:662). Consequently, this is another reason why it would make sense to employ the case study design because this research used a multiple data collection plan which is discussed later in section 1.10.4. The case study was thus conducted for the following reasons:

- It provides the researcher with studying the participants in their natural setting, the classroom and more specifically, the creative writing lesson.
- It provides the researcher with access to real-life situations, such as the actual implementation of teaching creative writing strategies in the classrooms.
- It provides the researcher with an opportunity to explore through multiple data sources how writing instruction occurs.

1.9.2 Site selection

The site selection refers to the place where the research will be executed which is suitable and feasible to answer the research question. Postholm (2019) recommends the selection of an appropriate research site. This research was carried out at two English/Afrikaans primary schools in Windhoek, in the Khomas region, Namibia. These two primary schools follow the national curriculum of Namibia and are government schools (state-owned) where learners of diverse socio-economic backgrounds are taught. Therefore, these schools were deemed suitable to gain more insight into how creative writing was taught and to build relationships with the teachers to be able to return to the same situation or participants if necessary. The teachers from these two schools reached out to engage in developing their creative writing strategies through a workshop. The following criteria were used to select the schools:

- accessibility to the researcher;
- availability of information-rich participants who were willing to participate in the research;
- English/Afrikaans is offered both as a subject and the language of learning from Grades 0 to Grade 3. The researcher is fluent in those two languages, and it would be problematic if writing lessons were presented in another language. The language policy of Namibia stipulates that mother tongue instruction is followed during the junior primary phase.

1.9.3 Sampling

Researchers search for knowledgeable participants who can provide valuable data to answer the research question. Qualitative researchers desire to gain deep insight into the thinking or perspective of a specific group (Christensen et al., 2015:173). In line with this goal, purposive sampling is typically used in qualitative research designs. Sampling means to choose a particular group for a particular reason to collect open-ended data in order to gain deep insight into the participants selected from a particular group. Purposive sampling permits the researcher to identify and select participants who would be able to assist in responding to the research question (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:351; Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). Participants in this study were selected because they taught in the junior

primary phase for more than two years and were regarded as knowledgeable about the teaching of creative writing in Grade 3. Postholm (2019) indicates that the unique composition of the case itself can provide more information pertaining to the research than the mere size of the sample, therefore a small sample of six teachers was selected. In contrast to random sampling, purposeful sampling is not proposed to deliver a representative sample or bring about generalisable findings but to provide a deep insight into the phenomenon. In this context, participants were purposively sampled to provide insight into the effectiveness of current strategies in creative writing instruction.

1.9.4 Data collection techniques

A multi-method approach was applied to collect data on the teaching of creative writing in Grade 3. In qualitative research, three main data collection methods, namely interviews, observations and documents/artefacts are regarded as the norm (Merriam & Grenier, 2019:14). In this research, the multimethod collection included a document study, focus interviews, and lesson observations. Thereafter, a final focus group interview was held after the participants attended a workshop on teaching creative writing. Data was collected to prompt the participants' true experience and perception of teaching creative writing in the junior primary phase. Observation is regarded as a qualitative research practice that explores the phenomenon in its natural setting (Fouché et al. 2021:725) and therefore was conducted in the classrooms during creative writing lessons. As mentioned earlier, a document study was also done both from personal document analysis, such as analysing learner scripts and creative writing activities as well as public documents pertaining to the curriculum were also scrutinised. Photographs of the chalkboard displays and learner scripts were also used to triangulate the data.

1.9.4.1 Document study

To gain more insight into how creative writing learning outcomes are formulated, advocated for, and outlined, a document study was undertaken. This means a systematic process of scrutinising the documents (of a personal nature as well as public documents) to investigate what was written in these documents pertaining to

the research question (Fouché et al., 2021:734). Therefore, documents such as the national curriculum, the integrated planning manual, the language syllabi, and the Grade 3 assessment record book were scrutinised to determine the expected outcomes of creative writing at the end of the junior primary phase before visiting the schools. Hence, it provided an understanding of what is expected to be done, what is done, and how curriculum documents informed (or not) teacher decisions when teaching creative writing. The personal document study refers to learners' creative writing scripts to analyse the activities. Therefore, learners' scripts were assessed to look at the types of activities, feedback and corrections and common mistakes made in spelling, grammar, and sentence construction as indicated in the analysis guide. The researcher made prior arrangements to suit the participants on when to proceed with viewing and analysing learner scripts and taking photos of writing activities without revealing learner identities.

1.9.4.2 Focus interviews

After the public document analysis, focus group interviews were utilised to gain more understanding of how teachers perceive teaching writing strategies and their efficacy while being cognisant of the curricular expectations. Focus groups are customary data collection tools for qualitative, mixed-methods and quantitative methodologies (Pearson & Vossler, 2016). It has also been established that focus groups normally consist of three to fifteen participants to allow everyone to respond adequately (Fouché et al., 2021:774). In this research, the researcher assumed the role of moderator to guide the discussion. A moderator keeps the small and homogenous group focused on the topic of discussion (Babbie, 2016:314; Gundumogula & Gundumogula, 2020).

The focus group consisted of six Grade 3 teachers from two selected schools and the researcher. The sessions were recorded. After the group session, the interviews were transcribed and fieldnotes were compiled which were compared to the recording, (Fouché et al. 2021:777).

Focus group interviews “allow the researcher to examine perceptions held by others” (Christensen et al., 2015:74). Consequently, the teachers' perceptions of the approaches applied to writing instruction were evaluated. It is important to note that in this research, the researcher initiated a dialogue among participants and not between

the researcher and the participants like in semi-structured interviews or group interviews (Ochieng, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2018).

1.9.4.3 Observation

Two periods per week were spent in the Grade 3 classrooms in the two selected schools for four weeks to observe the creative writing lessons. Qualitative observations mean to make field notes about the participant's actions and behaviours at the research site (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:186), which in this case, is the creative writing lessons at the two selected schools.

An observation protocol was used to provide the structure within which to operate to ensure that the desired data was captured. Observation provided the researcher with the opportunity to look at what the participants did to corroborate some of the data obtained during the focus group interviews (Babbie, 2016:309). Fouché et al. (2021: 730) stress that because observation is so strongly connected to practice, it escapes the hurdle of becoming too theoretical and since practice is the crux of what this investigation aimed to learn more about, it is deemed a suitable strategy to use. Additionally, the necessity to make extensive and truthful notes of what was observed was adhered to (Babbie, 2016:316-317). The observation protocol was used to guide the taking of field notes when going to the classrooms and a specific time of the day was set aside to reflect on what was observed.

1.9. 5 Data analysis and interpretation

Qualitative data analysis involves how the social research data is scrutinised (Babbie, 2016:382) and unlike quantitative research, qualitative data analysis starts during the collection of data. Moreover, qualitative data analysis is an interpretive process and the researcher is a vital instrument in this process. Also, it is mainly an inductive process of organising data into categories and classifying patterns and relationships among the identified categories (Fouché et al., 2021:860). Therefore, the qualitative researcher needs to be acutely aware of what the data entails and be fully submerged in the data. Importantly, Creswell & Creswell (2018:193-198) implore researchers to approach the analysis of qualitative data as a procedure that must be carried out in a methodical manner which is set out clearly under section 4.7.

In line with this, Braun & Clarke (2020), highlight that the thematic analysis is a process that methodically finds, arranges, and offers insights into patterns of meaning (themes) contained within a dataset. Therefore, the reason for creating sub-themes is to indicate the interrelation to the broader theme. In addition to this, Fouché et al. (2021:857) describe data analysis as making sense of and attaching meaning to the collected data. For this reason, a systematic unpacking of the data was necessary to seek out the specific details needed to respond to the research question. As an interpretative technique firmly rooted in a qualitative framework, reflexive thematic analysis was created by Braun & Clarke (2006). As such, it is a feasible analytical choice for qualitative researchers. The core of the reflective thematic analysis strategy is the researcher's involvement in the generation of knowledge. Therefore, a reflexive thematic analysis was utilised to interpret the collected data to gain insight into the efficacy of the strategies used to teach creative writing in Grade 3.

1.9.5.1. Reflexive thematic analysis

The six phases of the reflexive thematic analysis by Braun & Clarke (2019, 2020) were followed: familiarising herself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and reporting. The analysis is considered adequate if it includes all the relevant evidence and deals with the most important issues pertaining to the research question (Christensen et al., 2015:379). This is the reason all of this was done to ensure that all the significant information pertaining to effective creative writing instruction was integrated into themes. In Figure 1.1 a depiction of reflexive thematic analysis shows the deep engagement of the researcher with the qualitative data.

Figure 1.1 Reflexive thematic approach

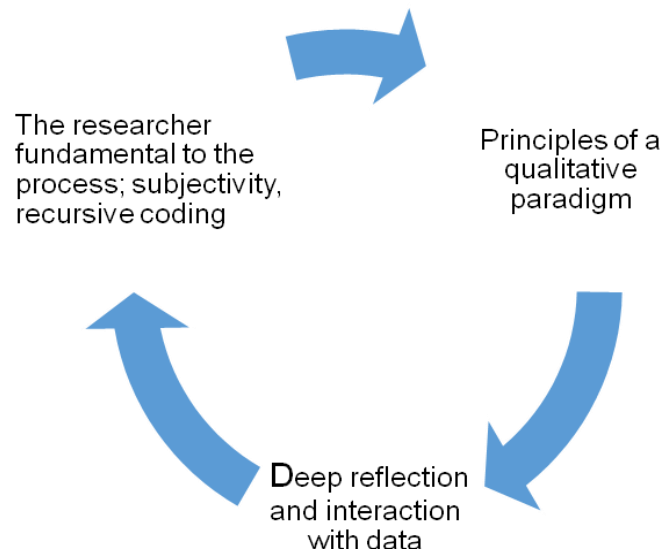


Figure 1.1 shows how reflexive TA processes mirror the principles of a qualitative paradigm, the researcher being fundamental to the process, subjectivity, recursive coding, and the importance of deep reflection on and interaction with data. The researcher's subjectivity is envisaged as a source or generator of knowledge and the researcher's reflexive engagement with theory, data, and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2020; Byrne, 2022). This implies that the researcher deliberately seeks to understand the perspectives of participants on creative writing instruction, instead of relying on his/her own connotations or even literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:182). Coding is the data analysis's primary procedure and basically means to categorise distinct data points (Babbie, 2016: 387). Hence, data is broken down into manageable chunks to develop codes which were then categorised and labelled as themes with the research question in mind.

In addition, the analysis was supported by the use of qualitative software, *QDA Miner Lite*. QDA Miner Lite is a free and easy-to-use, computer-assisted qualitative analysis software (<http://provalisresearch.com>). It is suitable for the analysis of textual data such as interview transcripts and open-ended responses, which is why it worked for this research. Using software afforded the researcher a way to store and organise all the data. This, in turn, added to the credibility of the research which is discussed below.

1.10 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

The power of qualitative research in its effort to study a process is embedded in its credibility (Fouché et al., 2021:847). Every effort was therefore made by the researcher who employed the following strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of this study: member checking, triangulation, peer debriefing, and a prolonged stay in the field

- Member checking

After the interview, transcripts were shared with participants which provided them with an opportunity to check whether their views were accurately recorded. This notion is highlighted by Fouché et al. (2021:847) and was done formally and informally.

- Create an audit trail

An audit trail is created to record methodological conclusions for further reflection at the interpretation stage. The researcher made field notes of lesson observations and the document study as well as records of her data analysis. Voice recordings of interviews and notes made were all kept safely. These records include how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the data collection and analysis. The audit trail's main function is to prove that the results, interpretations and conclusions are verified by the data (Fouché et al., 2021:844).

- Triangulation

Different data collection methods were used to compensate for the possible weaknesses in a single method. It strives to use different sources of data at different times (Fouché et al. 2021:847). This research employed different methods of data collection at two different research sites.

- Peer debriefing

This is a way to improve meticulousness in qualitative research by presenting insights to peers (Fouché et al., 2021:847). A colleague was asked to listen critically to the data presentation and then feedback was provided which the researcher used to check the trustworthiness of the findings.

- Prolonged engagement in the field

To further validate the research process, the researcher ensured that she engaged participants in the field. The more time was spent with the participants in their setting, the more credible the findings noted by the researcher were (Creswell &

Creswell, 2018:201). Although the researcher took care not to interrupt any lessons, she stayed after the lesson presentations to check how learners responded to the activities. She made field notes to capture what was observed. Participants gave the researcher access to the notebooks of learners at a time convenient to them for example, after they had marked the books. During that time extra time with the participant, the researcher would ask questions about the activities. Informal discussions followed, for example, what mistakes learners tend to make most of the time and how often learners leave the work incomplete. These interactions helped the researcher to gain more insight into the matter and to corroborate findings without impeding the daily schedule at work (Haenssger, 2019:60).

1.11 RESEARCH ETHICS

An effective research design is embedded in more than the selection of the participants and effective research techniques. It is imperative to adhere to research ethics. These include obtaining informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, trust and beneficence (Christensen et al., 2015:125; Fouché et al., 2021:286-290).

Furthermore, Haenssger (2019:125) points out that researchers require the necessary permission from relevant authorities before a study begins. The researcher wrote a letter to the Executive Director of Education as well as the Regional Director to seek permission to research while clearly stating its purpose and significance. These letters were then attached to the permission request letter that was submitted to the school principal for the said research to be done. The researcher made a follow-up visit to the principals and discussed the research with the Grade 3 teachers. The teachers were informed that the purpose of the research was entirely for educational purposes and that the information obtained would not be used to tarnish their reputation.

The teachers also received a letter to assure them that their identities would be protected and that their participation was valued. The researcher understood her two-fold responsibility: to protect the participants from others in the location and to protect all the informants (and the school) from the general reading public. Other considerations included the coding of the data to protect the participants' identity, privacy and confidentiality. This research ensured the anonymity of the participating

schools by coding them as 'School X' and School Y' and using pseudonyms to identify the participants such as TA, TB, TC, TX, TY and TZ.

The researcher committed to a partnership of cooperation, trust and openness with the teachers where meaningful open discussions with each participant were valued. The final report of this research was available to all participants, and they reviewed it before it was released.

Informed consent remains one of the most important ways to ensure respect for participants during research. In addition, participants completed the informed consent form which included an explanation of what participants must know, what the research was about to do and what to expect during the research. The dignity of all research participants was respected at all times.

1.12 LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS OF THE RESEARCH

1.12.1 Limitations

The researcher depended on the honesty of the participants in the study. This was somewhat challenging, as some individuals might not be comfortable disclosing these details. The research was limited to two primary schools in the Khomas Region in Namibia, and the participation of the teachers was essential.

This research only focused on the opinions, viewpoints and participation of the teachers in Grade 3. The research is qualitative, with an interpretative perspective that makes it difficult to generalise the findings.

1.12.2 Assumptions

The assumption is that the sample groups know the experience and commitment to answer the questions truthfully. Furthermore, the previously mentioned research questions were answered through observations, learner scripts and focus group discussions.

The main assumptions are:

- Poor writing skills were a concern to these primary school teachers.
- Teachers can benefit from an integrated strategy to teach writing effectively.

- Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) as an evidence-based strategy enhanced the teaching of writing.
- The researcher has to drive the research.
- Recommendations of the research may be implemented in primary schools and teacher training (pre- and in-service).
- Recommendations of the research could inform classroom practice.
- The benefits of forming a PLC can impact classroom practice and enhance continuous professional development.

The researcher assumed that the research questions could be addressed by qualitative research utilising a case study embedded in interpretivism and the creation of a PLC within each school.

1.13 THESIS OVERVIEW

Chapter 1: Background of the study, the problem and methodology.

This chapter contains the background and motivation, the problem statement, the aims, the paradigm perspective, the research design, and the method. Furthermore, the assumptions on which the study is grounded, and the paradigmatic perspectives are discussed as well as the limitations. It concludes with a chapter layout of the research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical background to the research. Different studies are reviewed to establish important links between existing knowledge and the research problem being investigated, namely how creative writing is taught in Grade 3. The constructs are examined in terms of definitions and results from previous studies to find out more about what is needed to improve creative writing.

Chapter 3: Literature review

This chapter explores literature on how creative writing is taught in primary schools, how the teachers support learners to develop this skill as well as how Self-Regulated Strategy Development instruction can impact writing instruction. Literature was

scrutinised to explore research-based approaches to improve the writing skills of learners in the early years of schooling, and the strategies to teach writing effectively in the early grades were explored. Previous research was used to find out how to create a PLC in schools to teach writing effectively.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

Chapter 4 discussed the research design and methods that were utilised in the process of collecting and analysing data for this study. The nature of the research problem and research questions seek to implement strategies to teach writing and reflect on it.

Chapter 5: Presentation of the findings

The main focus of this chapter is to discuss the observations and the responses of the interviewees to determine whether or not the main research questions have been answered. The chapter presents the context of the participants, analysis and interpretation of the study. Themes were developed based on the questions in Chapter 1. Data were organised and coded so that the themes could be identified. Thereafter, they were compared, interpreted and reported. A step-by-step process was employed. The qualitative data analysis used *QDA Miner Lite*.

Chapter 6: Conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the study

This chapter highlighted the conclusions that may be drawn from both the literature review and the case study conducted. Recommendations were made, and possible areas for future research were identified.

Data were organised, compared, interpreted and reported. A step-by-step process was employed. This chapter highlighted the conclusions that can be drawn from both the literature review and the case study conducted.

1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided the background to the study, the researcher's motivation to pursue this study and an overview of early childhood education in Namibia. It outlined the research study, the significance of the study, the research questions, the research

problem and purpose statement, the definition of terms and the research methodology. The next chapter will provide the theoretical framework for this research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented an introduction and background context to the research study, an overview of early childhood education in Namibia, the significance of the study, research questions, the research problem and purpose statement, definition of terms and the research methodology.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the theoretical framework that underpins this research. Furthermore, it explores how both the sociocultural theory and the social cognitive theory were utilised to provide the lens through which the effectiveness of strategies to teach creative writing was explored. Thereafter, a discussion on infusing the sustainability development goals (SDGs) in all teaching and learning follows.

2.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Theoretical frameworks express the insights and links in an occurrence which in turn provides a plan or layout for qualitative research. According to Grant and Osanloo (2015), a theoretical review is a systematic observation of the issue being investigated. Thus, the theoretical framework involves the particular theory (or theories) that underpins the researcher's plan and understanding of the matter to be investigated, which in this research focuses on how creative writing is perceived and taught in grade 3. In addition to this, Nolan and Raban (2015) explain that theories in the field of early childhood education and care may be defined as ideas that provide clarification of specific issues within the domain of children's learning and development. The idea is to provide clarity on why certain research-based strategies have the potential to enhance children's learning and development.

Moreover, Garvey & Jones (2021) concur that the theory reviewed in studies provides order to the research process as well as guidance on how practical actions should be carried out. The interpretivist researcher regards knowledge as a social construct (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2018; Garvey, & Jones 2021), and therefore the perceptions of the teachers on teaching creative writing in

primary schools are essential to understand their classroom practice and what informs it.

The underlying theories that informed the framing of this study are underpinned by the social constructivism theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and social cognitivism (Bandura, 1986). Vygotskian concepts such as the Zone of Proximal Development, more knowledgeable others, and internalisation are explored below. In addition to this, Bandura's self-efficacy and motivation are discussed. The selection of a theoretical position explained the processes involved in the use of creative writing strategies and forecast the prerequisites that must be satisfied for those strategies to be used successfully. This section begins by outlining two theories of human development in order to achieve the goal of providing teachers' creative writing strategies with a solid theoretical framework within which to explain their mechanism and comprehend the aspects which may contribute to their efficacy.

2.2.1 Sociocultural theory

Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism is used as a lens to explore the perceptions held by Grade 3 teachers on creative writing and how it is taught. This theory specifically guides teaching and learning. Vygotsky, a cognitive psychologist did not agree with Piaget's theory that new knowledge is constructed through the assimilation and accommodation of existing knowledge or that it follows development as the child matures. Instead, Vygotsky declares that cognitive development is embedded in social interaction and the integration of learners' knowledge of their culture and community (Pound, 2011; Edjah, 2018). Also, Panhwar, Ansari & Ansari (2016) regard social constructivism as an explanation of knowledge as a socially shaped instrument and learning as a social interaction between learners and more knowledgeable others such as their parents, teachers and peers. Hence, learning is situated.

Furthermore, Vygotsky theorises cognitive development as both inter-psychological, referring to the learner's interaction with others, and intra-psychological, which specifies the internalising of newly acquired knowledge (Jones & Araje, 2002). The process of making meaning therefore requires both social and individual insights. This is underlined by Vygotsky's explanation of how a child culturally develops on two planes, namely the social level, followed by the individual level (Jones & Araje, 2002). The first, the social level, occurs between people (*interpsychological*) and the later

development occurs inside the individual (*intrapsychological*). As a result, the link between cognition, culture and collaboration with others is clearly established. Therefore, sociocultural theory supports a cooperative interpretation of writing which implies that instead of being an onlooker, teachers should actively instruct learners and provide support before, during and after the writing process. In other words, scaffolding and modelling writing practices are highly recommended (Hodges, 2017). Similarly, when workshops are offered, teachers as participants should participate actively during workshops and support each other. Interaction among the participants (learners, teacher and peers) is prioritised above products. Unlike the cognitive process theory, where the emphasis is mainly on the mental development of writing, sociocultural theory embraces motivation, and affects the social stimuli as part of writing (Hodges, 2017). Hence, sociocultural theory provides the best foundation to frame this research together with Bandura's social cognitive theory. The social cognitive theory is explored after the discussion of The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) below.

2.2.1.1 The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the difference between what persons can do by themselves, which is the intrapersonal functioning, which reveals completed development, and then what the help of others potentially unlocks, which is the interpersonal functioning, which may reveal the (ZPD). The ZPD defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation (Vygotsky, 1978:86). Functions that have begun to develop but are still only possible with external mediation, can be identified (Van Compernelle, 2015). Furthermore, Van Compernelle (2015) purports a measurable ZPD notion that involves identifying higher functions that have begun to develop an actionable ZPD notion that focuses on the potential for interpersonal activity to enhance the progress of those higher functions through interventions. These concepts of a measurable and actionable ZPD operate cooperatively. For instance, Van Compernelle (2015) suggests that it might be better to focus on the identification of developing abilities when doing evaluations, but for classroom instruction, it might be better to focus on interventions to encourage development.

In this research, the focus is to explore creative writing instruction and how to enhance the teaching and learning thereof. In summary, fruitful interventions are those that position instruction toward the ZPD in order to prevent a situation whereby interventions are not on par with the development of the child. This is the crux of what Vygotsky referred to when he defined what good learning constitutes, which is developmental progress (Vygotsky, 1978:90). Elaborating on the same issue, Vygotsky maintains that learning rouses different developmental progressions that are only activated when the child engages his peers or others in his environment. Therefore, in the creative writing classroom, those writing functions that have begun to develop are getting the external mediation required from the more capable peer or the teacher.

2.2.1.2 More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

Vygotsky posits that children learn from their interactions with others (Vygotsky, 1987). The MKO refers to anyone who has a greater perception or a higher skill level than the learner concerning a particular activity, method or idea. The MKO is normally thought of as being a teacher, coach or older adult, but the MKO could also be a peer, a younger person, or even a computer (Jones & Araje, 2002). It is that person or device who has mastered the skill or is at an advanced level of competency. Since the ZPD shows the difference between a student's actual and prospective writing ability levels, teachers can use a range of tactics to assist a student with a particular part of the writing assignment (Bingham, Gerde, Pikus, Rohloff, Quinn, Bowles & Zhang, 2022). Importantly, this clarifies and highlights the instructive interconnection between the learners and the MKO. Therefore, a teacher's knowledge base must be solid, influenced by evidence and proven methodologies. One should also bear in mind that knowledge is inclusive of pedagogics, knowledge about language development, and knowledge of the learners in the classrooms (Georgiou, Mok, Fischer, Vermunt & Seidel, 2020).

In the creative writing classroom, MKO can refer to the teacher or the more capable peer and learner. Scaffolds could be the observations and feedback from the teacher that empower the learner to successfully finish assignments that were challenging to do on their own; scaffolding can therefore be considered as collaborative involvement, praise, advice, criticism, evaluation and optimally engaging the learner (Vygotsky,

1978). In this research, the MKO refers to the teacher and scaffolding to the instructional strategies employed in the Grade 3 classroom.

2.2.1.3 The role of the MKO in teaching creative writing

The Russian word *obuchenie* is interpreted as education (Moll, 1990); defined by Lund & Hauge (2011) as the two-fold activity of teaching and learning, whereby knowledge is shaped in the conversations and interactions between the teacher(s) and learner(s). This notion alludes to an interaction between the teacher and the learner, a dialogue. According to Harwood and Brett (2019), *obuchenie* incorporates and recognises learning as a modification in the cognition and mental progression of the learner. Hence, one can derive that to ensure some progress, meaningful dialogue between the teacher and learners becomes a pre-requisite. The implication for the Grade 3 teacher is that in order to scaffold creative writing effectively, dialogue is essential, talking through the process, and modelling the techniques and strategies in a learner-centred interactive process. Furthermore, Harwood & Brett (2019) emphasise the purposes and doings of the teacher and how the teacher designs a learning environment and lastly the cooperative rapport between the teacher and the learner therein. Therefore, in a creative writing lesson, this refers to the interaction between the teacher, who thinks aloud throughout the modelled writing activity, and the learner who is supported when creating their own written work. The knowledgeable teacher prepares the learning environment through creative writing lesson planning based on research-founded strategies that are proven to work. Furthermore, Barrs (2017) highlights that learner progress and development are at the core of teaching, and when the arrangement of content is rooted in detailed knowledge of children's skills in diverse settings; in other words, designing the learning opportunity in the creative writing lesson should be based on detailed knowledge of the children's skills in different contexts. What stands out is how imitation in children's play enables them to rise above the usual limitations and permits them to try out new connotations (Barrs, 2017). For this reason, the teacher provides an environment where learners become the interviewers of their favourite sports heroes, or the readers of the news on television; they learn that their opinion is found to matter in the creative writing class.

2.2.1.3 Internalisation

Wertsch (1998) refers to internalisation as a notion used when processes that were first executed on an external plane are later executed on the internal plane. This

parallels Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which posits that every function in the child's growth occurs twice (Vygotsky, 1978). Wertsch (1998) refers to the example of counting with the help of objects such as sticks or fingers. These objects or tools later disappear when the skill has been internalised. We can apply the same principle in the language class: learners who started out segmenting and blending words to read them aloud, eventually get to a point of automaticity. Similarly, constant guidance from the external MKO such as the teacher or peer would not be necessary as the inner MKO becomes stronger as the child becomes more adequately skilled. According to Vygotsky, the verbal direction of the inner MKO is assumed as self-guiding internal language. This internal language sanctions people to intentionally adjust their behaviour as if guiding another. Self-guiding internal language converts basic mental functions into consciously focused higher mental functions (Smolucha & Smolucha, 2021). The advancement of the inner MKO is thus required to bring about the process of internalisation. This is the case on both planes; for the teacher and the learners each on their level of development. Likewise, research upheld Vygotsky's claim that the self-guiding speech was not self-centred at all, rather that it was socially embedded and increased as the learner had to increase efforts to complete a task (Smolucha & Smolucha, 2021). Therefore, it makes sense to ground this research in the sociocultural theory. Both the MKO of the Grade 3 teacher and learner are to be scaffolded towards progress in creative writing instruction and development.

2.2.2 Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986)

Social cognitive theory is a psychological viewpoint on human functioning that emphasises the impact of social surroundings on motivation, education, and self-control (Schunk & Usher, 2019). As established earlier, self-influence governs behaviour and Bandura highlighted how important social factors and motivation are to understanding human behaviour. Schunk & DiBenedetto (2020) alert us to Bandura's assertion that to ensure that learning indeed happens, one needs to be mindful of modelled behaviour, to be able to reproduce the modelled behaviour, be motivated to do so, and be able to remember what it encompassed. Additionally, people are driven to try and emulate the behaviours they see as producing favourable results and beneficial to them. However, Eun (2019) asserts that mere observation of a successful

performance will not necessarily lead to development and learning, unless it is supplemented by scaffolded instruction between the more knowledgeable actor and the teacher participant or learner. Therefore, one can say that to ensure that development and learning take place, something beneficial has to be modelled and the modelling must be interactive. The interactive guidance in which the learner or teacher participant and the MKO engage in can be seen as scaffolded instruction. The same setup can be true for various scenarios like the teacher/peer and the learner or the lecturer and the teacher student or a workshop facilitator and the participant or a more knowledgeable colleague and one that observes.

Furthermore, the social cognitive theory emphasises how important modelled teaching performance is. In light of this, micro-teaching should be fundamental to all pre and in-service teacher training programs. Eun (2019) asserts that quick feedback increases one's perception of effectiveness, which has an indirect effect on future performance/lessons. Reliable feedback has to be timely, accurate and aptly related to areas of instruction that may be altered rather than factors outside of the teacher's control. This theory guides on how to go about effectively planning meaningful interventions/lessons. Hence, planning intervention like capacity-building is one evidence-based strategy (to benefit the teachers) to teach creative writing and improving creative writing lessons in itself (to benefit the learners).

Moreover, mediation and internalisation are the developmental mechanisms that the sociocultural theory proposes in relation to the observation and mentorship models. Specifically, Vygotsky (1978) identified the relationship between the more and less competent as the motivating force behind development. The mediation, techniques, criticism, and discussions that are exchanged are later internalised. In the end, the inexperienced teacher may use the outcomes of those discussions on his or her own without explicit instruction from the MKO. For instance, the more seasoned teacher might need to remind the less seasoned teacher to apply particular teaching strategies. The less seasoned instructor starts to use the techniques independently just like the child starts to write independently. This ties in with SRSD and again on both planes, for teachers as well as for learners which is why the social cognitive theory together with Vygotsky frames this research. It is the motivation that drives the individual to reach higher heights, therefore teachers who are motivated are more

open to change in their current practice. Thus, it is the motivation that propels goal-directed behaviours.

2.2.3 Language development

It is important to understand how language is used as a social mode of thinking as it develops. According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, cognitive development occurs when cultural tools are applied cognitively with guidance from more knowledgeable others with such tools and cultural institutions. In this research, it is the interaction between teachers themselves as colleagues, teachers and the researcher and then learners among themselves and learners and teachers. Cognitive development includes the individual's experience when exploring their environment by actively engaging in shared sociocultural experiences with other people (Rogoff, 2003). Therefore, conversations at home, visits to family and attending cultural events like weddings which is a whole family affair in most Namibian cultures enhance the world of the child. For example, this includes the expanded vocabulary younger children acquire through interaction with older siblings, parents and community members. During the early years, language and theory of mind develop together and support one another to different degrees during different developmental stages (Astington & Pelletier in Homer & Tamis-LeMonda, 2005). Theory of mind and language in development are viewed as interlinked aspects of literacy. Language competence, on the one hand, consists of lexical and syntactic knowledge as well as skilful interpretation and expression when communicating (Astington & Pelletier in Homer & Tamis-LeMonda, 2005). Theory-of-mind competence, on the other hand, refers to mindfulness (e.g., attention, perception, desire, intention, emotion, knowledge, belief) and the ability to use this mindfulness in understanding and envisaging the behaviour of self and others (Homer & Tamis-LeMonda, 2005). All these aspects are essential to acquire literacy skills, and therefore, also creative writing skills.

Furthermore, Vygotsky explored the role of pretend play in learning and found pretend play with object substitution, the peak of pre-school development as it generates a zone of proximal development (Smolucha & Smolucha, 2012). Guided pretend play develops abstract thinking (e.g., an object represents something else) and the famous Vygotskian example of riding a broom or stick while pretending to be on horseback

displays powerfully how creatively children can think. This ability to make use of substitute objects paves the way for cognitive development (Smolucha & Smolucha, 2012). This is why it can be concluded that play can be used to introduce other educational activities such as making props, drawings, reading, writing and counting in pre-school and onwards.

Play refers to the figurative interactions in which people and objects are regarded as though they are someone or something completely different (Kaufman & Kaufman, 2010). It is therefore necessary to understand that language is an important intermediating tool in learning processes, and creative writing may be regarded as pretend play on paper. Vygotsky (1986) illustrates that the coherent, deliberate transmission of experience and thought to others necessitates a mediating system, which is embodied in the constructs of human speech. Owing to its complex nature, writing is dependent on the formal meanings of words and involves a much greater number of words than oral speech to convey the same message. The implication is that the reader of the written text does not necessarily have the same reference as the writer, and therefore, the writing is required to be done thoroughly and rigorously (Vygotsky, 1986). This enhances the objective to make every effort to bring about skilful writers. The question of how to develop pretend play on paper into an authentic story for a real-life audience is thus raised.

2.2.4 Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

The research is also cognizant of ESD and sustainability competencies. The need for sustainability in education and societal transformation (Bürgener & Barth, 2018), including pedagogical transformation, is gaining more importance. Every stakeholder in education should therefore be aware of the essence to ensure sustainability. In agreement with the findings of Songqwaru and Tshiningayamwe (2021), creating a PLC within the school opens possibilities to impact teaching and learning positively. In alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (DESA, 2015), adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 (Namibia is one), the social learning processes and sustainable education are to impact the current practice. The approved Agenda 2030 articulates 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are to be reached by 2030 (Griggs et al. 2013); and pertinent to this research is SDG 4: inclusive

quality education for all and the promotion of lifelong learning (DESA, 2015; Bürgener & Barth, 2018; Songqwaru & Tshiningayamwe, 2021). This provides further substantiation as to why classroom practice should remain relevant, and teacher education is to be regarded as an ongoing process. This sentiment is echoed by De Clercq, Shalem & Nkambule (2018), highlighting that teachers require adequate preparation and training to meet the curriculum policy requirements. Adequate preparation signifies that teacher training is to be sufficient to enact the curriculum effectively.

Education for sustainable development requires dedicated and skilled teachers who are driven to act as administrators of this transformation (Bürgener & Barth, 2018). It is one thing to say something and another to engage actively in bringing about transformation. Furthermore, Bürgener & Barth (2018) highlight the question of what kinds of knowledge and skills are required from teachers to enable them to act as active administrators of transformation and how teacher education can advance such knowledge and skills. In light of this research, the call to sustainability in education can be adhered to by ensuring that the evidence-based methodologies are sustained through effective PLCs, and this can be infused into teacher training curricula. Besides, it can be inferred that since the movement of teachers and learners within regions and schools cannot be limited or controlled, the teacher remains the role-player in picking up the mandate to embrace PLCs. This, in turn, will ensure the continuous development of pedagogical skills, which brings forth effective learning and teaching.

As already mentioned, one way to address the poor writing skills of learners (McKeown et al. 2016; Julius & Hautemo, 2017) is to ensure that research-based methods (Colwell, Pollard & Pollard, 2015) reach classrooms, and this ties in with continuous professional development, hence the exploration of a PLC (professional learning community). PLCs are centred in adult learning theories as adults have skills, experience and knowledge to share and they strive to be involved in the processes of planning and directing learning experiences. This ties in with socio-cultural learning, which in turn is associated with the work of Vygotsky (1978). Through Vygotsky's theory, scaffolding indicates that people learn at a much higher level when support for

their learning gap is provided through peer interaction or the contribution of a more knowledgeable other (MKO) (Vygotsky, 1978).

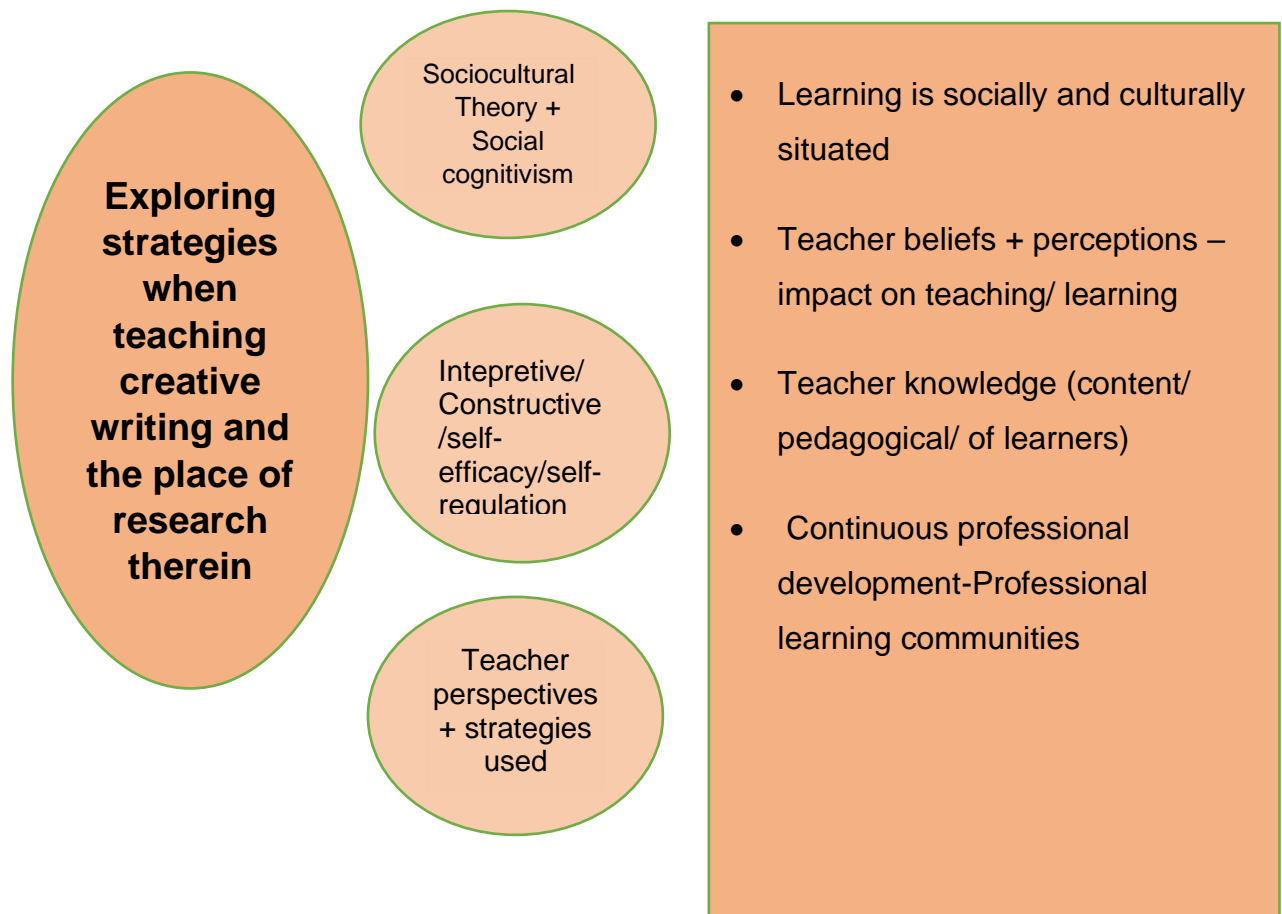
Kelly (2017) reminds us of what andragogy, as formalised by Knowles in 1978, encompasses. Knowles (1978) based his theory of adult learning on Lindeman's (1926) main concepts: a) Adults are inspired to learn as they experience needs that learning will satisfy; b) Learning is self-centred through life situations; c) Experience is the richest resource; d) Adults have a profound need to be self-directing; and e) Adult learners need individualised learning. Songqwaru and Tshiningayamwe (2021) assert that PLCs have proved to be effective models of teachers' professional development. It can therefore be assumed that PLCs are one sure way to embrace sustainable teaching.

2.3 VYGOTSKY AND BANDURA AND THE SELF-REGULATED STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT (SRSD)

The perspectives that the primary school teachers held toward creative writing instruction were explored from a sociocultural perspective. As mentioned earlier, the Russian word *obuchenie*, which Vygotsky used in writing about learning and the actionable ZPD, does not translate directly to the English word, learning (Cole, 2009). Instead, it refers more to instruction-learning, where instruction and learning are revealed as a whole rather than two detached developments. Therefore, instruction and learning, which are interrelated, are compatible with the SRSD as a cognitively oriented intervention. What stands out further is that the six instructional stages of SRSD (develop background knowledge; discuss it; model it; memorise it; support it; and independent performance) manifest the Vygotskian (1978) notion regarding the importance of teaching in the ZPD and scaffolding (Hodges, 2017; Shvarts & Bakker, 2019). That is why this framework aims to show that not only can teachers' perspectives have an effect on their approach to teaching creative writing, but also how using an evidence-based method and creating a PLC within the school may help the Grade 3 teachers and learners enhance teaching and learning sustainably. If the scaffolding process is optimally and purposefully developed, both the teaching and learning of creative writing skills can be impacted. Figure 2.1 shows the components of this research.

Figure 2.1

Theoretical framework



Source: Researcher’s construct (2022)

This theoretical framework in Figure 2.1 shows the interrelation between the sociocultural theory and how scaffolded instruction by the MKO is emphasised and SRSD as a research-based instructional approach that embraces scaffolding while working towards independent writing which ties in with the sustainability development goals (SDGs) such as quality education.

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on how the sociocultural theory provides the framework for this research as theorised by Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978; Cole, 2009; Van Compernelle, 2015; Barrs, 2017; Harwood & Brett, 2019). It outlined the role of the ZPD and MKO in the creative writing lesson. It also showed the interrelation between scaffolding on

the two levels: intra and interpersonal for both teacher and learner. Lastly, it underlined the potential of creating a PLC in schools to ensure the sustainability of effective teaching and learning. The next chapter explores the literature on why applying research-based methods is so important, knowledge shared during the creative writing process, teacher perspectives and beliefs on teaching creative writing, the impact of SRSD, and the skills needed to develop creative writing.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

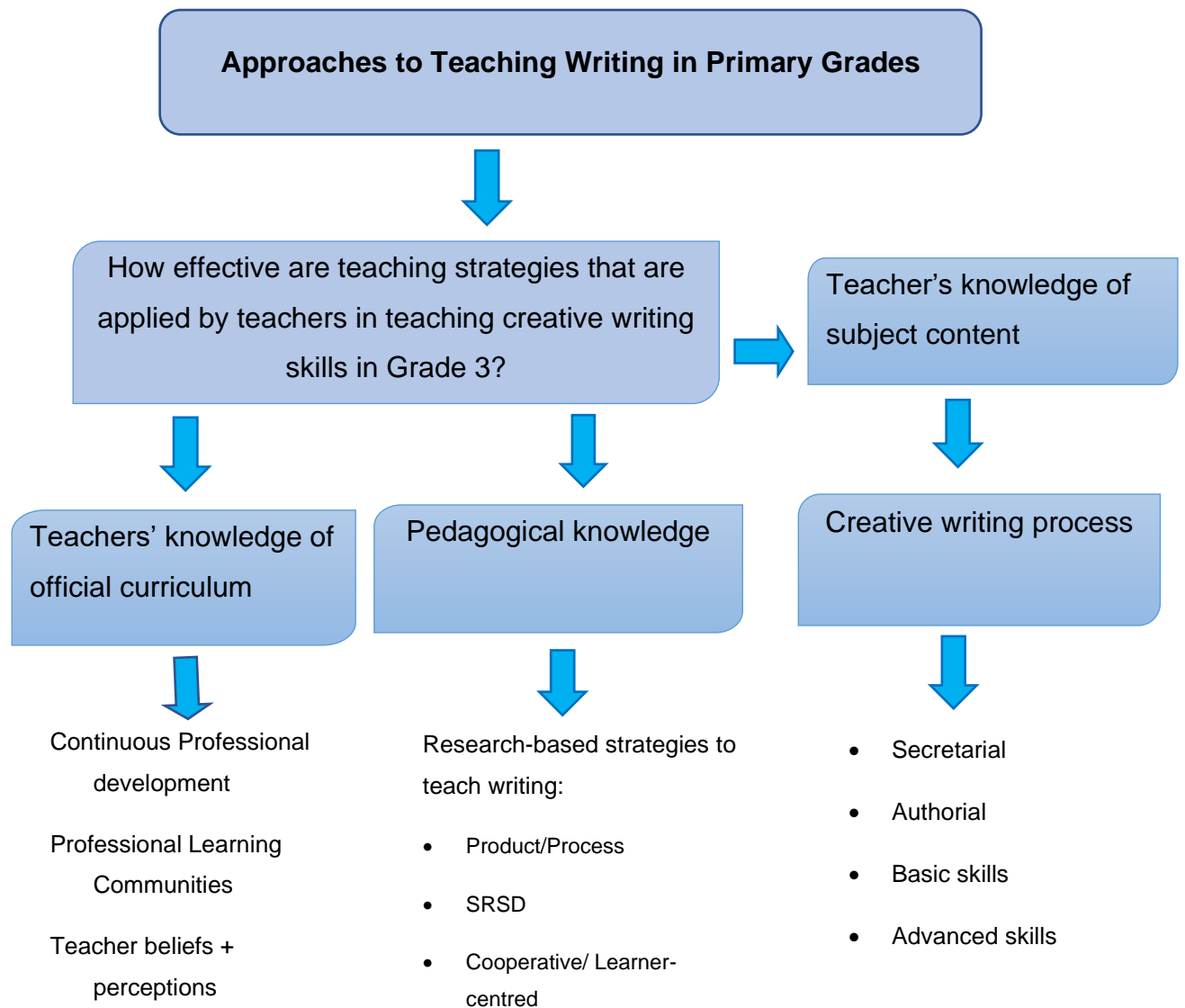
The previous chapter described the theoretical framework used in this study. This chapter presents the scope of the literature review, followed by a discussion thereof. This chapter provides an exploration of existing literature on teaching creative writing in the international arena as well as closer home, neighbouring countries and local contexts; why research-based methods must find their way to the classroom; the type of knowledge shared during the creative writing process; teacher beliefs and perspectives on teaching creative writing; and how SRSD can impact the teaching of creative writing. It also presents the skills needed to develop creative writing and how creating a PLC in the school can help to ensure sustainability in teaching and learning. It concludes with a section on how creative writing.

3.2 A LITERATURE MAP OF THE STUDY

The literature map is a diagram that presents the research literature on the efficacy of teaching creative writing. This visual version enables the researcher to recognise patterns or major topics in the literature that help to answer the research questions based on creative writing instruction (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It indicates how the literature was reviewed based on the research questions. Having a diagram or visual image of this conceptualisation permits the researcher to organise the literature, identify where this research fits into the literature, and persuade others of the importance of this study and the researcher's understanding thereof.

Figure 3.1 depicts the layout of the literature in this research according to the topics embedded in the research questions.

Figure 3.1
Literature Map



Source: Researcher's construct (2022)

The literature map in Figure 3.1 shows the graphic plan of how the literature review was conducted. Guided by the research question and the recommendations found in previous research reports, the literature review started with what exactly the teaching of creative writing entails. Thereafter, the literature on the skills needed for writing was explored, including diverse strategies to teach creative writing. The literature review also probed into curriculum knowledge, continuous professional development and

creating PLCs because all these issues were prominently highlighted in previous research as mentioned earlier in Chapter 1.

3.3 TEACHING CREATIVE WRITING

3.3.1 Local and global perspectives

The local reports on performance in some Namibian primary schools highlight the inadequate teacher training, and irrelevance of teacher training curricula (NIED, 2012, Van Wyk & Mostert, 2016; Julius & Hautemo, 2017; Shikalepo, 2020; February, 2020; Katukula, Set & Nyambe, 2023). Although the researchers focused on their areas of interest, one common factor stands out; what is happening in primary schools is not in line with the national goals for education. Therefore, the recommendations made in the NIED report, namely providing educators with the information they require, capacity building and the application of a variety of techniques and tactics were used to guide the search for relevant literature.

In South Africa, the NEEDU (2013) report highlighted subject knowledge, knowledge of the official curriculum and knowledge of how to teach the subject as crucial teacher knowledge. Therefore, the literature incorporated content knowledge, curriculum knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge to find solutions to the research problem. National and international tests like the Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS) and the (former) Annual National Assessments (ANAs) reveal the reading and writing challenges faced by a large number of South African students (Spaull, 2022). Mathura & Zulu (2021) emphasise that writing is essential to a child's education because it provides an opportunity for creative expression and the exploration of meaning. According to Mathura & Zulu (2021), learners still have difficulties while writing in English because they absorb knowledge in their native tongues and then convert it into English when they write. Similarly, Namibia faces the same challenge despite the language policy of mother tongue instruction in the junior primary phase. Although the language policy was supposed to alleviate the issue, the problems persist. Therefore, Mathura & Zulu (2021) call on educators to develop effective teaching methods that cater for the difference between the language of

learning and teaching (LoLT) and learners' home language or mother tongue, encapsulates the Namibian context.

The relationships between teaching methods, instructional time, and instructors' attitudes and abilities were studied to identify possible supports and roadblocks for writing instruction in the Netherlands (Rietdijk et al. 2018). Altogether 61 teachers from 45 elementary schools in the Netherlands took part in the study. The findings highlighted the primary causes of low writing proficiency include a lack of time spent on writing instruction and practice, uneven use of evidence-based practices, and teacher perceptions of insufficient training. Also pertinent to this research is how classroom practices arise from teachers' beliefs, experiences and skills, which are embedded in history and culture (Rietdijk et al. 2018) hence, the need to enhance self-efficacy.

In a study with Swedish teachers of Grades 1, 2 and 3 (Alatalo, 2015), the importance of teacher knowledge regarding language elements was highlighted. Therefore, the teachers themselves need to be able to display the knowledge they hope to develop in their learners. This is why knowledge of the preceding processes in language development (phonemic awareness, code concepts, spelling and grammar rules, syntax) must be seen as essential teacher knowledge. This demonstrates the importance for all teachers to receive training to teach creative writing regardless of the phase/content specialisation. Closer home, in South Africa, similar sentiments are echoed; that the effectiveness of any curriculum or pedagogy is influenced by the instructors' knowledge, comprehension, and writing techniques (Ngubane, 2018).

Another study of forty-seven pre-school teachers across two US states (Bingham et al., 2022) explored the writing proficiency of the pre-school instructors and how it influences the classroom writing instruction procedures. The findings show that very little modelling and expansion, with a tendency to emphasise handwriting, are used in classrooms. It was found that more often than not, teachers utilised strategies to make writing simpler for the children. Since instructors were seen performing the majority of the mental or physical work involved in writing, the majority of instructional tactics were regarded as being of low quality.

The research concluded that teacher development and professional learning models are required to support in-service teachers in implementing meaningful early writing

experiences that highlight the connections between early reading, language, and writing skills because teachers' instructional practices were of relatively low quality. These findings are consistent with the report recommendations for Namibia as well as South Africa whereby professional development, PLC and teacher knowledge are highlighted.

3.3.2 Why evidence-based research is so important

Young writers need explicit scaffolding to develop syntactic and thematic coherence in their texts and to enhance their use of punctuation and cohesive devices (Del Longo & Cisotto, 2014). Furthermore, Colwell, Pollard and Pollard (2015) assert that in order to teach effectively, teachers and educators must incorporate more than just the content of the curriculum. Teachers should thus seek strategies and approaches that bring about optimal learning and teaching. The importance of employing evidence-based strategies in classrooms can therefore not be overemphasised.

Rietdijk et al. (2018) indicated that the main reasons for poor writing skills are caused by insufficient time allocated to teaching writing as well as for writing practice, inconsistent use of evidence-based methods, and teacher perspectives on inadequate training. This implies that teacher practice should be guided by what research evidence found valid (Georgiou et al. 2020). Therefore, teachers are required to know what is going on in research so that they can make informed decisions. After establishing what research is communicating, the next move will be to implement it while being mindful that learning is situated and socially constructed. Moreover, evidence-based teaching can be seen as those research-based practices that should form part of teachers' knowledge base and that teachers apply in their practice while infusing scientific evidence into their teaching. However, Georgiou et al. (2020) warn that the gap between scientific evidence and classroom practice, experience, and the teacher's professional judgement should not be overlooked. It is important to keep in mind that both experience and evidence strive to improve teaching and learning (Georgiou et al. 2020). This enhances understanding of possible reasons why creative writing classrooms still lack evidence-based methodologies, and it underlines the impact of teacher perspectives.

In considering the process of creative writing, Hodges (2017) laments the notion of viewing writing as an intricate structure of cognitive processes instead of focusing on writing as only an imaginative undertaking. To teach creative writing effectively, an understanding is needed of what it encompasses. It is the teachers' knowledge and understanding of writing and approaches to writing that influence the success of any curriculum and pedagogy (Ngubane, 2018). This was highlighted by the differences found between what the curriculum stated and the writing that was produced by learners (Ngubane, 2018). The learner's progress was not in alignment with the curricular expectations. Similarly, Graham (2018) posits that although there are several manners in which teachers can acquire knowledge on how to teach writing, the most effective one is to follow the evidence. Evidence-based methods influence teaching practice positively (Graham & Alves, 2021). A convenient way to learn about writing is by teaching it to others and finding effective methods in the mid-process (Graham, 2018). Then there is the learning through watching others and copying what was seen and believed to be effective. Neither of these methods provides the desired outcomes (Graham, 2018). Therefore, understanding that research does not only provide research-based methodologies that are proven to work, but it also provides a variety of strategies to employ in the classroom and can spearhead effective writing programmes which in turn advance teaching and learning (Graham & Alves, 2021).

3.3.3 The SRSD approach to creative writing

Gillespie Rouse and Kiuvara (2017) single out this approach to writing and specifically to improve the writing of learners with disabilities because it has been extensively studied. Graham, Harris, and Santangelo (2015) highlight five writing practices that have profound effects on the writing quality of learners with learning disorders, namely: strategy instruction, goal setting, dictation, word processing and the process approach to writing.

Self-regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) for writing instruction, embedded in a process interpretation of writing, was developed in the 1980s by Karen Harris (Graham & Harris, 2018; Hayes & Flower, 1980). Consequently, when employing SRSD, explicit writing processes are focused on, for example, planning or revising (Salas et al.2021).

This strategy employs easy-to-use tactics like using mnemonics such as the POW + TREE. POW stands for pick an idea, organise notes and write more. TREE stands for topic sentence, reasons (three or more reasons and one counter reason), explain reasons, ending and examine when writing opinion pieces. In the case of writing a narrative the mnemonics, POW + WWW + 2W + 2H, can be used. It stands for who, when, where, what the character does, what happens, how the story ends and how the character feels. More guidance is offered for other genres. The self-instruction planner with statements on how to keep oneself on track is created and managed by learners to pace their learning. The SRSD approach supports learners to plan self-reliantly, order and arrange ideas, write, and then review their work (Harris et al. 2002). This is why this approach to writing is more likely to reach the place where scaffolding is of such quality that the teacher will do less and the learner more. Salas et al. (2021) elaborate on the usefulness of SRSD in writing instruction, whether it is creative, argumentative or informative. Moreover, SRSD is cognisant of the much-debated role that socio-economic backgrounds bring to the writing development of the young writer. This comprehensive instructional approach helps children explore genre elements and writing processes irrespective of their socio-economic background while offering self-regulation strategies to improve their writing (Salas et al. 2021).

In the same vein, Ozdowska, Wyeth, Carrington & Ashburner (2021) sought out SRSD as an efficient methodology to provide aid to learners on the autism spectrum. SRSD brought about the assistance needed with the conceptual challenges the learners encounter with writing tasks; using SRSD, therefore, afforded assistance to learners on the autism spectrum to apply themselves in a focused manner to plan, compose and assess their writing (Ozdowska et al.2021). It may be deduced that SRSD can be applied across genres, across disciplines and across socio-economic status to teach writing to a diverse population of differently-abled learners. Another strength of SRSD is that it breaks down writing tasks into manageable chunks. Thus, SRSD gives the impression of being an effective preparation for learners with and without learning uniqueness (Salas et al. 2021). Although the evidence points toward good effects regarding SRSD, it remains vital to evaluate the generalisability of SRSD to other populations to investigate whether the effectiveness of the intervention transfers to different cultures and, when implemented by teachers, not researchers, in a real naturalistic classroom setting such as Finlayson & McCrudden (2019) did with learners

There are variances in the way writing is taught in schools in different countries, and it is important to investigate whether SRSD is effective in different cultural contexts, which is why this research is exploring it in Grade 3 classrooms of two government schools in Namibia. The research by Finlayson and McCrudden (2019) highlights three major outcomes. First, all teachers need to incorporate the parts of a story as part of writing instruction because learners gain much when understanding that. Second, pre-schoolers and primary school learners can also benefit from SRSD. They are capable of following the mnemonic and easy-to-recall tactics employed by SRSD. This is encouraged to prevent writing difficulties experienced in early childhood from spiralling out of control (Finlayson & McCrudden, 2019). Third, it is sensible not to regard SRSD as a cure-all because writing strategy instruction does not necessarily address all the areas in language development to become efficient in writing. That is not what is being advocated for; some of the SRSD benefits were grasped by all the learners, and some did not show any improvement in their writing skills (Finlayson & McCrudden, 2019; Salas et al. 2021).

3.3.4 Skills needed to develop creative writing

Writing is an effortful activity at all ages (Myhill & Fisher (2010). Hayes (2012) describes writing as an extremely complex skill, while Bazerman et al. (2017) draw attention to the lack of admiration for the journey of the competent writer, as opposed to the esteem held for established sports, music, dance or graphic arts. Understanding that creative writing demands a focused effort from the author leads to the next question about what competencies are needed to master this complex skill. Teachers of writing need to be well-informed about writing, its development and writing instruction strategies (Faulkner et al. 2010; Graham, 2019). Hodges (2017) observes that writing theory is constantly fluctuating from an emphasis on mechanics and form to an emphasis on creativity and sociability. The two key skills required for writing include handwriting (fine motor and perceptual skills) and the conceptual and language skills needed for written composition (Ozdowska et al. 2021). Others speak of basic and advanced skills or foundational oral language skills (vocabulary and grammatical knowledge) and higher-order cognitive skills (e.g., inference, perspective taking, monitoring) (Kim & Park, 2019). Earlier on, Peters and Smith (1993) described writing

in terms of authorial and secretarial roles. Mackenzie and Hemmings (2014) apply that to explain the authorial role relates to the organisation of ideas and concepts to speak to an audience, and it is, in turn, affected by oral language skills. The secretarial role of writing concentrates on the surface features of written text, such as spelling, handwriting and punctuation. The children's ability to hear and say sounds in words and their ability to spell the words then constitute their writing vocabulary. It is essential that both facets of writing development, basic and advanced or authorial and secretarial, transcribing and composing, be explicitly taught in writing strategy instruction (Harris, et al. 2015; Swant, 2016; Ozdowska et al.2021).

Earlier research mentions "skills such as handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation" while simultaneously attending to the topic, organisation, word choice, and audience needs (Moats, Foorman & Taylor, 2006). Colwell et al. (2015) highlight the provision of opportunities and different contexts for oral communication to enhance language development. One can deduce that the receptive skills of language are equally important to develop production skills. Mackenzie et al. (2015) emphasise six prominent parts of writing: text structure, sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and handwriting/legibility. Besides, Swant (2016) postulates that print concepts, letter knowledge, phonemic awareness and oral language skills are essential to writing development. Phonology, semantics and syntax make up what oral language skills consist of. Phonology refers to letter-sound knowledge, semantics refers to morphemes as the smallest meaningful parts of words, and syntactic knowledge includes knowledge about making sentences.

Writing as a production skill implies the generation of ideas, decoding them into oral language, and copying them into written text (Kim & Park, 2019). Therefore, if a learner can convert their thoughts and ideas to text successfully, the learner has mastered the skill of writing. These researchers focus on transcription (spelling and handwriting fluency), higher-order cognitive skills (inference, perspective taking, and monitoring), oral language (vocabulary and grammatical knowledge), and executive function (working memory and attention). On top of this, Van Heerden & Veldsman (2021) zoom in on four essential facets of young children's language learning: play, story-telling, conversation and discussion. In light of how oral language skills are featured as a pre-skill to writing development, it can be regarded as fundamental to writing.

3.3.5 How knowledge is shared during the creative writing lesson

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, knowledge refers to pedagogics, knowledge about language development, and knowledge of the learners (Georgiou et al. 2020). It is, therefore, essential to ensure that all teachers know the language to ensure success in teaching creative writing.

Barrs (2017) asserts that Vygotsky hoped to find a science of teaching, a pedagogy, and Shanahan & Tochelli (2014) also highlight the importance of the approaches chosen to share knowledge in the classroom; equally important, to be cognisant of how the grammatical didactic content knowledge of teachers empowers them to facilitate the class discussion purposefully (Myhill, Jones & Watson, 2013).

One of these approaches, a Balanced Literacy Approach (BLA), involves literacy being taught by applying an equilibrium of bottom-up and top-down approaches; both phonics skills and whole-language approaches are given equal consideration when teaching (Mondesir & Griffin, 2020). In shared reading and writing, both the teacher and learners interchangeably take on the roles of the reader and writer; whereas, in independent reading and writing, the learners read and write on their own while the teacher monitors them (Willson & Falcon, 2018). Not only are these approaches to writing well-documented, but they are also endorsed in the curriculum documents. The implication is that knowledge of the curricular framework is essential to ensure delivery and particularly provide the teacher with the context to design a writing framework. In support of this, Taylor (2019) identifies three factors that support effective teaching: content knowledge (CK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and curriculum knowledge. The balanced literacy approach integrates both reading and writing equally during instruction (Thomkins, 2017). However, the parts that make up the balanced literacy approach fluctuate (Willson & Falcon, 2018), and thus there is no one methodology. Possible approaches to writing skills development include the following:

- **Guided writing:** This refers to group work where the teacher focuses on the development of specific competencies while the rest of the class continues independently. The creative lesson is concluded by summarising the target competencies and learners relating their victories (Willson & Falcon, 2018).

- **Shared writing:** This is also called modelled writing and is regarded as the demonstration or modelling of writing by the teacher. It entails talking through, instructing, writing as a whole class, and teacher-led interaction, which enables learners to catch on to the writing process for themselves (De Lange, Dippenaar & Anker, 2020). Shared writing implies generating a writing product with learners, supporting them to create a shared text representing their ideas with the teacher's scaffolding and writing. This activity may be done on a flip-chart or the board so that everyone can follow the process. Shared writing is a powerful way to ensure that children are properly prepared for a writing task (De Lange et al. 2020). The writing activity is made concrete and visible to learners and, when dealing with a writing task in a particular genre, it is useful to show the children an example of that type of writing first. Good options to show such texts are Big Books or enlarged pre-written texts on the board or posters. Before the children begin to write on their own, the teacher and learners construct a text together on the topic. As the children suggest sentences, the teacher writes down what they say, getting their 'help' and thinking aloud to show how it is done. The shared writing component aims to release learners' working memory so they may focus on the thought processes necessary to master a certain writing skill (Milian, 2005). This approach is also strongly emphasised in the SRSD strategy for writing.
- **Interactive writing:** This happens when the teacher and learner work together to make up a text; it is another supported writing practice with several resemblances to shared writing. Learners also participate by sharing their ideas, but in interactive writing, the teacher and learners share the task of writing. The teacher creates, writes, and thinks aloud, but this time the teacher provides opportunities for learners to take the chalk/pencil to write letters, words, phrases, or sentences with the teacher's guidance.
- **Independent writing**

This refers to being able to successfully convert ideas or concepts to linguistic forms (Bruning, Dempsey, Kauffman, McKim & Zumbrunn, 2013). In other words, when learners can compose paragraphs on their own, autonomous writing is achieved. Language skills do not develop in isolation therefore creative writing skills remain interconnected to other language skills such as reading, listening, speaking and

spelling. In line with this, Jouhar & Rupley (2021) contend that creative writing skills, spelling correctness, substance, grammatical accuracy, and text organisation improve with independent reading. Importantly, reading provides excellent written text models. As a result, independent readers are exposed to strong mechanics, grammatically correct forms, and well-organised text structure (Jouhar & Rupley, 2021) which they can use to model their own writing. Similarly, Culham (2019) asserts that well-read writers are knowledgeable about a variety of topics that they may not even be aware of, such as syntax, vocabulary, imagery, voice and style, phrasing and cadences, and subtle word choices. Consequently, it reminds us again of the power of the modelling technique which remains an authentic way to develop creative writing skills as well as the importance of mastering basic skills.

The benefits of shared and interactive writing are well recorded (McCarrier, Fountas & Pinnell, 2000; Callella & Jordano, 2000; Culham, 2014 and Graham, 2019; 2021), and, among others, it strengthens the connection between oral language skills and writing skills and enables learners to zoom in on generating ideas and text without the cognitive strain of transcribing accurately. This positive experience encourages and motivates learners to participate in the writing activity and to see it through, which helps them on the path of independence.

Van Steendam (2016) highlights that writing in small groups or pairs helps learners replicate each other's approaches and each other's regulation processes, which enhances their development of writing skills. In addition to this, Herder et al. (2018) assert that reflection is needed because talking about writing, both the process and the product, boosts its development. Collaborative, reflective writing instruction has proved to be advantageous for developing writing skills effectively. Myhill (2015) highlights that writing is solely fostered and developed through direct teaching, whereas oral development stems from engaging socially with other people. Therefore, the instruction of writing requires purposeful intent, and oral language skills can be applied to enhance it.

Another point to highlight is the influence that teacher beliefs and expectations have on learner achievement and learning. Research suggests that the teacher's expectations and perspectives may have an impact on the behaviour and achievement of learners (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron & Osher, 2020; Gentrup,

Lorenz, Kristen & Kogan, 2020). As mentioned earlier in this section, learners' knowledge and how they learn plays an important role in the teaching and learning process. It is the teachers' understanding of the role of affect in cognition that will compel them to reflect on their own expectations. Teacher expectations influence teacher behaviour. Teachers with high expectations invest more time in developing an outline for optimal learning, asking challenging questions, assessing for learning, giving critical feedback, and aiming to provide scaffolded instruction (De Boer, Timmermans & Van Der Werf, 2018). It is thus vital to capacitate teachers to provide scaffolded instruction to strengthen learners' writing abilities, including how to use explicit modelling techniques in teacher training programmes (Zhang & Bingham, 2019).

3.4 THE PROCESS OF CREATIVE WRITING IN EARLY GRADES

As mentioned earlier, to prevent learners who have not yet mastered writing from becoming negative and discouraged, it is necessary to understand what happens during the early grades. Importantly, the interconnectedness of language skills like oral language, reading, and writing skills is fundamental to understanding creative writing development. Another crucial foundation for teaching creative writing effectively is an understanding of the processes that come before the reading and writing skill development (Alatalo, 2015). For this reason, teachers need to understand that the early stages of emergent writing involve symbolic drawings originating from play and social interaction until they develop into more self-regulating expressions. Thereafter, children progressively use their evolving orthographic skills to symbolise their concepts and notions (Puranik & Lonigan, 2014). Pre-schoolers' early writing skills include letter writing, name writing, spelling, knowledge about the conventions and functions of print, and descriptive use of writing. Puranik & Lonigan (2014) emphasise that understanding printed language is a prerequisite for literacy development. Puranik & Lonigan (2014) develop a framework for writing with three correlated but separate factors namely, conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge, and generative knowledge, which characterise these emerging writing skills.

Children's understanding of the purpose of writing, the purposes of print, and understanding that print carries meaning and is a medium for communication, provide the first building stone for early writing, called conceptual knowledge. The second

building stone refers to children's knowledge of the exact symbols and conventions needed for the production of writing, like alphabet knowledge, letter-writing skills, name-writing skills, and spelling. The first word children write is generally their own name (Puranik et al. 2011). The third building stone signifies children's developing capability to compose phrases and sentences. This model of emergent writing skills consisting of three separate domains (conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge, and generative knowledge) fits well with the levels of language framework proposed for conventional writing skills (Whitaker, Berninger, Johnston, & Swanson, 1994). Puranik & Lonigan (2014) draw a parallel between the procedural knowledge domain of emergent writing and the transcription component in the model for older children, which corresponds to word-level writing; and the generative knowledge domain of emergent writing relates to the text generation component in the model for older children. In addition to this, letter writing and spelling are significant transcription skills that enhance the composition of texts (Puranik & Al Otaiba, 2012). Factors such as oral vocabulary, pre-reading skills, understanding concepts of print, and being able to identify alphabetic letters at the commencement of formal schooling, are known to predict success with writing within the first few years of schooling (Daffern et al. 2016).

In line with these findings, Mackenzie & Hemmings (2014) demonstrate that oral language skills and phonemic awareness envisage writing vocabulary in the first year of school. Children's phonological awareness (based on phoneme and syllable manipulation tasks such as blending and elision), when measured at age five, predicts writing competence at age 11 (Savage et al. 2007; Kim et al. 2015) assert that oral language, word reading and spelling in kindergarten predicted narrative writing in year 3. Similarly, Ying, Shuyan, Puranik & Breit-Smith (2018) emphasise that children's early writing competencies, which include name writing, letter writing and spelling, should receive attention as it affects writing skills later on. This underlines the importance of starting already in the early years to create purposefully designed environments for optimal learning.

3.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, literature on why research-based methods need to find their way to the classroom was reviewed, then the type of knowledge shared during the creative writing process, teacher beliefs and perspectives on teaching creative writing, and how SRSD can impact the teaching of creative writing. It also presents the skills needed to develop creative writing and how creating a PLC in the school can help to ensure sustainability in teaching and learning.

Past research highlighted how the cluster system has failed the teachers, and the need to put empowering structures in place is evident. It remains important to ensure the Continuous Professional Development of the junior primary phase teacher.

The literature then concentrated on understanding the process of writing as well as investigating the best strategies to teach it in the early years. It discussed the SRSD method and its impact on writing instruction. This in itself is a starting point to address the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. The next chapter focuses on the research methodology of this qualitative investigation.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the literature review of this research. Literature on the importance of research-based methods to teach creative writing was discussed. Also, the need for evidence-based strategies to be incorporated into classroom practice was discussed, followed by a discussion on the creative writing process itself and the impact of teacher beliefs and perspectives on teaching creative writing. This chapter presents and discusses the research methodology and the research design. Furthermore, it also deliberates on the population, the sample and the sampling method. The research question, as formulated in Chapter 1, is also recurrent here because it framed the research design: *How effective are teaching strategies that are applied by teachers in teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3?*

Sub-questions

In an attempt to address the main research question, the following sub-questions emerged:

1. What are teachers' perspectives on teaching creative writing in Grade 3?
2. What evidence-based strategies are used to teach creative writing in Grade 3?
3. What are teachers' perspectives on employing Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) in the teaching of creative writing skills in Grade 3?
4. How can creating a PLC within the school serve as an intervention/recommendation to improve current ways of teaching writing in Grade 3?

To find relevant answers to the above research questions, the first step was to adopt a research paradigm for this study. The paradigm is outlined below.

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm constitutes a way of doing, and when conducting research, it is the understanding that all inquiry has to be framed within that specific way of doing. Therefore, researchers must adopt the research paradigm within which their research will be embedded and have a thorough understanding of their selected paradigm to authenticate the methodology and methods that are eventually selected to answer the research question (Fouché et al. 2021:23). A paradigm is a theoretical framework that informs or frames a study (Matta, 2022; Fouché et al. 2021:23).). The reasons why researchers select specific methods are embedded in their paradigmatic beliefs. One's philosophy is rooted in how one makes sense of the world around us, while a paradigm is all-encompassing of several aspects that can be defined as ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. Consequently, these aspects influenced how the research was framed as a qualitative, case study. Therefore, before the researcher discusses the research paradigm of this study, she will first define philosophy, ontology and epistemology.

4.2.1. Philosophy

A common question in interviews relates to one's philosophy in a particular field. Philosophy which is derived from the Greek word, *philosophia*, means the love of wisdom (Fouché et al., 2021: 23). Therefore, philosophy speaks to how one makes sense of the world sense of the world and the quest for knowledge in one's field of interest. Hence, as an educator seeking knowledge in the education becomes the instrument through which I observe and make sense of the world around me.

The study focuses on the exploration of teacher perspectives in creative writing and strategies used to teach creative writing. To comprehend human conduct and be defined by individual interests, an interpretive/constructivism paradigm position was adopted in this study. I believe that knowledge may be constructed from the participant's experiences through interpretations and reflections. Even though exploring the perspectives and beliefs of teachers is mostly dependent on interactions with several participants in this research, my experiences, as well as my own ideas and assessments, are also relevant. This is in line with the interpretivist's belief that knowledge is not stumbled upon or discovered, but constructed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:9). Such an explanation agrees that the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm reflects my worldview and my understanding of the process of creating knowledge.

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007:47), a paradigm is a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which give rise to a particular worldview. Nieuwenhuis further asserts that a paradigm speaks to basic presumptions held to be true, such as views on the nature of reality (ontology), the relationship between the knower and the known (epistemology), and methodological presumptions.

The researcher first takes a certain position on the nature of knowledge based on their own worldview, which will subtly influence how they approach the research process and, ultimately, how they choose to gather data and analyse it (Fouché et al., 2021:23-25). My position as an interpretivist/constructivist is depicted in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1. Researcher's personal paradigmatic layout

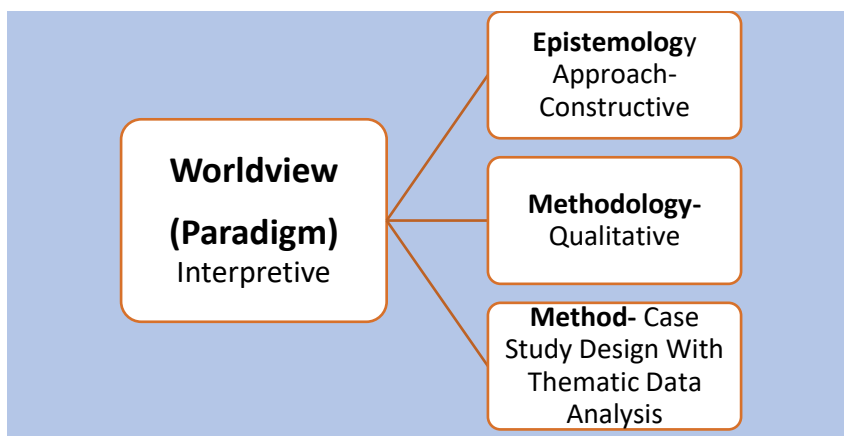


Figure 4.1. shows that the researcher's philosophy or worldview is embedded in the view that knowledge is time and context-bound and therefore learning is situated. This leads to an interpretive/constructive paradigm typical of a qualitative researcher who wants to experience the phenomenon in its natural setting and therefore this research is legitimately designed as a qualitative, exploratory case study.

The ontological and epistemological views that researchers hold are: “the key factors affecting the process of research design” (Keser & Koksai 2017:295). Hence, the explanation of the key factors that influenced this research is my sincere interest in understanding the complexities of this issue, investigating it in its natural setting, with the population that matters in this context, namely the teachers and the learners. The reason for this research lies within the objective of finding ways to mitigate the challenges of creative writing instruction.

The following sub-sections discuss the research ontology and epistemology in light of the above understanding.

4.2.2. Ontology

Ontology refers to the researcher's perspective on what reality means (Fouché et al., 2021:635) and it facilitates the establishment of hypotheses by researchers on reality, its forms, and the knowledge that may be extracted from it. Ontology is a tool used by researchers to study the nature of reality.

The main ontological query that philosophers tackle is this: Should social reality be seen objectively or subjectively? Objectivism and subjectivism are the two ontological stances that social science research takes based on this idea (Don-Solomon & Eke, 2018). Subjectivism, also known as constructivism or interpretivism, therefore holds the perception that social phenomenon determines the behaviours that follow. Understanding and interpreting the meanings of human action is the goal of an interpretivist researcher; such researchers are not concerned with demonstrating causal links or generalisability (Merriam, & Tisdell, 2016:24; Don-Solomon & Eke, 2018). Qualitative techniques are the primary means by which interpretivist researchers collect information about and analyse human activity. For this reason, qualitative methods such as focus group interviews, observation and personal document analysis are part of the data collection method in this case study of exploring strategies used to teach creative writing.

Objectivism, on the other hand, asserts that social entities exist apart from the social players who give them any thought. Researchers who hold this stance ontologically presume that there is just one reality and that it ought to be investigated impartially (Fouché et al., 2021:25). This implies that the researcher sets out to investigate the phenomenon as objectively as possible and can be done when specific measures are put in place to ensure objectivity. Researchers whose research is predicated on this supposition employ carefully considered hypotheses, controlled variables, and experimental techniques to support or refute knowledge. Typically, they use quantitative research techniques to replicate previous studies and generalise study findings (Fouché et al., 2021:25; Don-Solomon & Eke, 2018).

On the one hand, this study assumed that the sociocultural environments in which the primary school teachers were working had shaped their understanding of creative

writing instruction. On the other hand, their understanding and beliefs shaped their instructional choices and vice versa. This further implies that various socio-cultural aspects explain the perceptions of the teachers. The most relevant variables were their training, their classroom realities, their understanding of the creative writing process, their knowledge and interpretation of the Namibian curriculum and their learners' learning styles and access to books and literature. Considering this ontological foundation, the study employed a case study research design, and the qualitative research approach to collect, analyse and interpret data.

4.2.3 Epistemology

Ontology is the study of what we understand to be the essence of reality, whereas epistemology is the study of how we come to know certain things about it and how we represent it (Cooper & White, 2012:16). It is regarded as having internalised knowledge which indicates an intimate bond between the knower and the knowledge. According to Tennis (2008), epistemology is the assertion of what knowledge is legitimate in a study of knowledge organisation, and therefore, what makes for legitimate sources of evidence (presenting that information) and legitimate knowledge outcomes. In other words, how does the researcher justify what is known and legitimately established? Together, ontology and epistemology define the researcher's worldview and shed light on what the researcher thinks to be the nature of truth, the nature of the world, and the methods of existing in it (Berryman, 2019). Therefore, when a researcher adopts a particular epistemology, he/she usually approves approaches that are typical of that epistemological stance. For instance, in this research, an interpretive/constructivist approach has been embraced whereby the researcher as knower becomes intimately connected with the knowledge made. Moreover, such knowledge as the rich data obtained during the focus interviews, observations and document analysis provided insight into the strategies used to teach creative writing.

4.2.4. Postpositivism

According to Creswell & Creswell, (2018:7), postpositivism postulates that reality is too complex to be fully understood and mostly seeks to determine and evaluate the factors influencing results like in experiments and trials. The postpositivist holds onto a theory and collects data objectively to test that theory. This perspective speaks more to

quantitative than qualitative research and it asserts that there is never an exact truth (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:6-7). For this reason, postpositivism is not regarded as suitable for this subjective research that seeks rich data to make meaning of the experiences of others.

4.2.5 Pragmatism

Pragmatism is mostly associated with mixed-methods research. A mixed method includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Merriam & Grenier, 2019:12). The pragmatic researcher regards knowledge as ever-fluctuating and focuses on the problem to find a solution, by using diverse methods to understand the issue. Pragmatism is applied in cases where knowledge is regarded as multi-faceted, it emerged among philosophers who disagreed with both interpretivism and positivism and attempted to find a way to bridge the differences (Fouché et al., 2021:9-10). Pragmatism is based on the epistemological tenet that research may avoid metaphysical discussions concerning the nature of reality and truth by concentrating on "practical understandings" of tangible, real-world issues and problem-solving techniques.

4.2.6 Constructivism/Interpretivism paradigm

The Constructivism/Interpretivism paradigm is focused on the importance of understanding individuals and their explanations of their surroundings. It is embedded in the belief of socially constructed realities, and context is seen as essential for knowledge and knowing. Researchers engage participants to make meaning and record research data (Ugwu et al., 2021). Reality is seen as subjective (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020) depending on the researcher's ontological belief.

Therefore, this study is underpinned by constructivism/interpretivism, which perceives that rich information can be obtained from the participants in their natural settings. Human engagements are influenced by the background and context in which they take place (Merriam & Grenier, 2019:12; Christensen et al., 2015:68); this exploratory case study was therefore focused on studying the creative writing strategies applied by

Grade 3 teachers in their natural setting, the classroom. The classroom and specifically the creative writing lesson provided the data needed for this research.

Although the interpretive/constructive paradigm adheres to a methodical approach to generating knowledge, it upholds the belief that there are many social truths as opposed to the notion of a single, distinct truth which is upheld by postpositivism. Instead of aiming toward objectivity, the researcher's perspective is valuable in the interpretation of data in this research approach (Fouché et al., 2021:853-855). The interpretivist focuses on gaining understanding via various kinds of subjective information to find answers to questions that we attempt to comprehend. Therefore, this qualitative investigation was embedded in an interpretivist approach which deals with understanding the social phenomena from the participants' views (Merriam, & Tisdell, 2016:24; Christensen et al., 2015:68). The participants' views were sought out and valued in this research about the strategies used in teaching creative writing.

In this approach, the participants' perspectives on the teaching of writing skills were studied. The exemplar of qualitative research is founded on the social sciences, which encompass the study of people (Fouché et al., 2021:132; Grenier, 2019:3; Merriam, & Tisdell, 2016:24; Christensen et al., 2015:68). Therefore, qualitative research is mainly based on the social roles, experiences and behaviour of human beings. The participants were observed to conceptualise an account of how writing instruction takes place in the classroom. Furthermore, Merriam and Grenier (2019:13) emphasise that a research design aims to find an effective way to acquire evidence to attempt to find a solution to the problem which has been identified. The problem, as identified in Chapter 1, was to explore how the creative writing skills of Grade 3 learners could be affected by SRSD.

Information was collected by observing the context within which the phenomenon occurs, in this case, the creative writing lessons. After and during the observation, the process was described in detail by engaging in dialogue with participants and constructing clarifications of what happened during writing instruction.

As a qualitative researcher, it was necessary to enter the Grade 3 classroom to gain an optimal understanding of writing instruction methodologies. Creative writing lessons were observed, and learners' notebooks were examined to gain more understanding of the effectiveness of the writing instruction strategies.

The interpretive paradigm as well as the qualitative research methodologies pertaining to this study, led to the decision to focus on this research by employing a case study. In light of the understanding that interpretivist researchers often focus on the interaction amongst people (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Haenssger, 2019), the researcher attempted to make sense of the views that others hold about the world as emphasised by Creswell & Creswell (2018) which in this case is the teachers' perceptions regarding creative writing. The study investigated teachers' perceptions, beliefs and practices pertaining to teaching creative writing, and this involved descriptions of people's beliefs, values and reasons, as well as decision making. Because of this, the interpretivist framework was found to be appropriate for this study and was thus used.

The ontological belief that normally accompanies interpretivist views paints a picture that is socially constructed and multifaceted (Fouché et al. 2021:18). Interpretivists acknowledge that each person brings a different experience, education, and culture, which brings about meaning-making through social interaction. The interpretivist researcher emphasises the importance of human perspectives and how they interpret their social experiences and make meaning thereof. Alharahsheh et al. (2020) state that the interpretivist researcher reflects on the behavioural characteristics based on participants' experiences to make meaning. Hence the interpretivist regards the context of the research as focused on the specific topic and its given situatedness and strives to refrain from generalisation. The implication is that rich information about what strategies are used to teach creative writing in Grade 3 can be obtained by interviewing and observing people who are directly involved, namely the Grade 3 teachers. The study thus sought to explore the perceptions and beliefs of Grade 3 teachers about creative writing and how it is taught and therefore, an interpretive approach is used to understand the depth and complexity of this issue.

Based on the previous conversation, I agree that reality is socially produced when seen via an interpretive lens. As they interact with the environment, they are trying to comprehend people and create meanings (Kamal 2019). I also contend that when individuals engage with each other, their historical and cultural biases affect how individuals perceive themselves and interact with their surroundings in search of meaning. Because of this, open-ended questions are frequently used by qualitative researchers to provide participants the chance to express their opinions (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, it is the researchers' responsibility to examine the environments to comprehend the historical and cultural influences that have shaped the participants' worldviews and self-belief systems about their own abilities. In other words, the self-efficacy of participants.

4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Of the three research methods called quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods, the most appropriate one for this research is the qualitative option. The researcher believes the meaning is socially constructed by individuals interacting with their world, which is what qualitative research encompasses (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Fouché et al., 2021:). Unlike quantitative research, where a single worldview is embraced and seen as a fixed phenomenon, qualitative research strives to understand how people perceive their own experiences in their contexts which tie in with the research questions formulated in this study.

Qualitative research deals with monitoring the participant in context to obtain insight into the participant's world. Interpretation of what is perceived was based on the context; in other words, the research was centred on the qualitative researcher's certainty that the actions of people are rooted in the circumstances or setting in which they occur. Consequently, it would be challenging to understand how writing is taught without the context within which writing is taught.

The qualitative researcher attempts to depict the actual situation from the participant's angle (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Haenssger, 2019). Similarly, this investigation has made every effort to analyse the qualitative nature of writing methodologies by closely observing the practices and insights of the participants. The exploration of how individuals experienced and interacted with their social world and the connotation it holds for them is thus based on an interpretive (or constructivist) perspective rooted in a qualitative approach. It followed a case study research design and adopted an interpretivist approach which was regarded as most appropriate for this study. The use of qualitative research principles as well as insights from the literature were applied to provide information to teachers that they will use to improve aspects of language teaching practice in terms of instruction strategies aimed at supporting the development of writing skills in the junior primary phase.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY

The choices made by the researcher on how to go about influencing the entire project. The research philosophy and the research technique used have an impact on how a researcher decides to conduct the study or respond to the research question (Ugwu, Ekere & Onoh, 2021). Furthermore, the qualitative researcher also selects the research design, which may be a case study, grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography or a narrative enquiry. In this research, a case study was deemed most suitable to answer the research question. An exploratory case study design was selected in this study as a thorough investigation of the personal experiences of the research participants to explore current methods of teaching writing in Grade 3. More specifically, the case study was carried out for the following reasons:

- It is suitable for real-life situations, such as the actual implementation of teaching methodologies in the classrooms.
- It provides the researcher with an opportunity to explore and gain insight into how writing instruction occurs.

According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), it is imperative for researchers to comprehend the fundamental epistemological and ontological presuppositions and to further understand how the presumptions used influence the methods and approach that researchers use. Also, equally important, is how these relate to the research results.

Shah and Al-Bargi (2013) classify research paradigms into three types, namely positivism, pragmatism and interpretivism/constructivism which are defined in the next section. This is followed by the motivation why this research is underpinned by interpretivism.

4.5 SITE SELECTION AND SAMPLING

4.5.1. Research sites

Qualitative research aims at selecting contexts and participants that would optimally aid the researcher in finding answers to the research question, as alluded to by

Creswell & Creswell (2018:185). Therefore, the selection of sites and participants is based on the research question. Qualitative methods of sampling, data gathering and analysis require the researcher to obtain information from the selected participants in the natural setting to understand participant experiences and meanings from their point of view (Merriam & Grenier, 2019:13-15; Haenssger, 2019:53). This is why the natural setting most suitable for this research was the Grade 3 classroom in a primary school. More specifically, the creative writing lesson was the ideal place and setting to collect data in the natural setting where creative writing is taught. Therefore, for this research, two schools were thus purposefully and conveniently selected. The following criteria were used to select the school:

- Accessibility to the researcher
- Located in Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia, Khomas region provides a cultural and socio-economic representative backdrop
- These schools have reached out to strengthen their creative writing methodologies through possible workshops
- English/Afrikaans is being offered as either a subject or used as the medium of instruction in the junior primary grades. The researcher is fluent in both those languages, and it would be problematic if writing lessons were presented in another language. The language policy of Namibia stipulates that mother tongue instruction is followed during the junior primary phase.

4.5.2 Sampling technique and participant selection

Purposive sampling permits the researcher to identify and select participants that would be able to assist in responding to the research question (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:351; Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). For this reason, purposive sampling was used to recruit participants who could provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation. The participants were the teachers who currently teach Grade 3 at the two selected schools. These teachers were regarded as individuals with knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation. Postholm (2019) indicates that the unique composition of the case itself and how it is analysed can provide more information concerning the research than the mere size of the sample. Therefore, the research

thus focused on the two schools to gain more insight into how creative writing is taught and to build relationships with the teachers to be able to return to the same situation or participants if necessary. These are schools that the researcher has visited before to evaluate students in school-based studies, where the teachers expressed the need for more guidance on motivating learners to write creatively. Since the need for intervention was expressed by these schools, they were selected purposefully.

During the development of the research proposal in 2021, the researcher conducted informal interviews with the relevant teachers to gauge their interest in the possibility of participating in the research. Participants were thus purposefully selected because they were willing to participate in this research. In addition to this, they teach either in English or Afrikaans, which are languages that the researcher is fluent in; and they also showed interest in exploring research-based strategies to teach creative writing. Grade 3 was selected because it is the final grade of the junior primary level, and this is the grade that both principals advised would be best equipped to deal with a visitor in class. These schools were thus selected because the principals and teachers were open to receiving the researcher. The Grade 3 teachers were specifically willing to participate and explore research-based methodologies.

In purposive sampling, the researcher determines what crucial characteristics are needed to answer the research question and this determines participants to be interviewed or contexts to be observed (Merriam & Grenier, 2019:14). Hence, the sites in this research were selected, as mentioned before, based on the physical location and the language of instruction. According to Postholm (2019), purposeful sampling is based on the premise that the researcher wants to determine, understand, and gain insight into a phenomenon and thus needs a suitable sample from which the most knowledge can be obtained. Therefore, purposeful sampling was selected, and Postholm (2019) highlights this type of non-probability sampling as the method of choice for most qualitative researchers. Therefore, the researcher conveniently and purposefully selected two primary schools with Grade 3 offering Afrikaans/English and collected data from the targeted population.

For this research, two primary schools were selected and three Grade 3 teachers were willing to participate in this research. The researcher is fluent in those two languages, and it would be problematic if writing lessons were presented in another language. The language policy of Namibia stipulates that mother tongue instruction is followed

during the junior primary phase. The Grade 3 teachers from two different schools were purposefully selected because the research is focused on the early grades of formal schooling.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION

As mentioned before, a multi-method approach was applied to collect data. The main data collection method was focus interviews to prompt the participant's true experience and perception of teaching writing in the junior primary phase. Classroom observation and document analysis were used to collect data. The formulated questions in the interview guide were answered and the progress of the learner indicated the success of the lessons presented.

4.6.1 Observation

The researcher spent two periods per week in the Grade 3 classrooms of the two selected schools for four weeks. Creative writing is slotted for once a week, and therefore, one writing lesson was observed per week with each participant. Comprehensive notes on the writing instruction lessons were compiled and photographs were taken of the teaching aids and chalkboard notes. The observation guide provided the structure within which to operate to ensure that the desired data was captured. Creswell & Creswell (2018:186) emphasise that observation provides an opportunity to record information as it happens in a situation and to examine actual conduct. Observations included taking photos of the learning and teaching material to capture all the details pertaining to the creative writing lessons. This was done after the lesson to minimise intrusion.

The intention was to observe how creative writing lessons were taught and to identify what approaches were used by teachers. In addition to this, the learner responses and how learners applied the skills acquired in their own creative writing were also observed. The latter used the personal document study which is discussed later on in this section. The observation was used to enable the researcher to gain a deeper insight and understanding of the research problem in the natural setting. As a qualitative research procedure, observation is mostly open-ended and exploratory (Merriam & Grenier, 2019:14; Haenssger, 2019: 44-45; Fouché et al. 2021:724) and the researcher decided beforehand to take on the role of observer-as-participant

whereby a limited amount of time is spent in the classroom and informed consent was obtained to observe the participants. Although being more of a participant may lead to the researcher not being regarded as an outsider, it is better to gain more insight objectively when observing classroom procedures and behaviours by being more of an observer (Fouché et al., 2021:724-725).

4.6.2 Document study

According to Fouché et al. (2021:734), this implies a systematic process of scrutinising the selected documents to make objective comments on what was written in these documents pertaining to the research question. However, two types of document study may be identified in research, namely public documents and personal documents (Fouché et al., 2021:734-736). Private or personal documents refer to how persons have lived or engaged with their social environment, regarded as a first-person account, whereas public or official documents are compiled and maintained by organisations and provide an internal view of the organisation. In this research, the personal document study revolves around the learners' creative writing scripts to observe how learners interpret writing tasks and how they execute them. In light of this, public documents like the a) national curriculum, b) integrated planning manual for Grade 3, c) Grade 3 first language syllabus and d) Grade 3 assessment record book were scrutinised to determine the expected outcomes of creative writing at the end of the junior primary phase. Further, all the guidance and requirements regarding the teaching of creative writing were recorded. Thereafter, a review guide was used to study learner scripts after school/during breaks to prevent unnecessary disruptions to classroom procedures. Notes were made and compared to the outlines in the official documents mentioned earlier.

4.6.3 Focus interviews

A focus interview is a scenario whereby a moderator maintains a small, interconnected group focused on a particular issue throughout the conversation (Christensen et al., 2015: 73). The focus group interviews were conducted at the two primary schools. It was recorded by using a voice recorder to capture all the data. However, in order to

protect participants' privacy and freedom to participate in the study, the researcher sought permission from the participants before recording. Because participants found a video camera too intrusive, they agreed on a voice recorder. The benefit of having the voice recording is that evidence of the interaction enables the researcher to double-check the comprehensiveness of the verbal communication that took place (Christensen et al., 2015:76; Fouché et al., 2021:776-777).

This study utilised focus group interviews to gain more understanding into how teachers perceive teaching writing strategies and their efficacy while being cognisant of the curricular expectations. The researcher assumed the role of moderator. A moderator keeps the small and homogenous group focused on the topic of discussion (Christensen et al., 2015:74).

Each of the four focus group interviews consisted of three Grade 3 teachers from each of the two selected schools and the researcher. After the focused interview, notes were compiled which were then compared to the recording. The last focus group interviews were held after a workshop at each school. The workshop was an interactive session between the researcher and the participants on introducing SRSD as a strategy to teach creative writing.

The focus group provides an opportunity for the researcher to investigate participant perspectives and also permits probing (Christensen et al., 2015:74). Therefore, it can be regarded as a guided conversation (Gundumogula & Gundumogula, 2020) where the moderator steered the conversation in the direction of the research focus while also trying to manage dominating participants. In this case, the researcher was investigating participants' own continuous professional development, SRSD as an evidence-based approach to teaching and how creative writing was perceived by teachers. The number of interviews was dictated by the data (Fouché et al., 2021:775), therefore it is not the researcher who determines how many interviews to have, but rather as the research progressed and data were generated. Instead, it is whether data saturation was reached where no new data or themes emerged anymore. The researcher prepared participants in advance that it would be necessary to meet more than once. The participants agreed on a space close to where they were able to talk freely (Fouché et al. 2021:776).

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is mainly an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among categories (Merriam & Grenier, 2019:14). Therefore, in this study, a thematic content analysis started while the observations, document study, and focus group interviews were conducted, and the preliminary analysis indicated how to adapt questions to focus on central themes as the research was conducted. After the first focus group interview, a more intense analysis determined if other additional themes and concepts were uncovered to investigate how effective creative writing strategies are. Comparing material within all the categories to discover nuances, hints, and variations helped to gain a better understanding of the data.

The next section describes how the data was analysed.

I used a thematic analysis to analyse the data from the two focus group interviews which I gathered from the six junior primary teachers who participated in this study. A thematic analysis refers to an interactive method to identify themes and patterns to make meaning of the collected data (Fouché et al., 2021:859). I analysed the data by using computer software, namely QDA miner Lite. The analysis included the six phases proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006) familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Firstly, I imported all the Word documents to the software and initial codes were generated. Thereafter, I exported the codes by selecting the coding frequency to a Word document again where I categorised the codes and labelled them to develop themes. I searched for themes from the coded data, reviewed the themes, defined and named the themes and finally presented and discussed the findings. The data were based on the broad research question: How effective are teaching strategies that are applied by teachers in teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3? In order to familiarise myself with the data, I read and re-read the field notes and transcriptions to get the exact meaning as intended by the participant (Baun & Clarke, 2006; Check & Schutt, 2012). After familiarising myself with the data, I returned to the participants again after making prior arrangements not to inconvenience them but to verify the information provided to ensure accurate representation. The process

of data analysis necessitates the following consecutive stages to be followed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:193-198; Fouché et al. 2021:863-864):

- Prepare the data for analysis (typing up field notes, organising them, transcribing interviews, sorting out board display photographs aligning each to their corresponding lesson observation, typing out document analysis findings and sorting learner activity photographs).
- Get to know the data (overall impression, general ideas of what lesson observations, document analysis and the focus group discussion yielded)
- Coding (to classify the data by placing brackets around sections and labelling each one with a category term by using hard copies of observations, analysis and transcriptions and uploading them in the QDA Miner Lite software)
- Describe and assign themes (provide a context, use codes and describe the creative writing lessons, teachers' strategies, the types of learner activities and the content of the curriculum and use codes to create themes. These themes/concepts become the main conclusions of the research on how creative writing is taught.
- Continuation of coding and code clustering (ongoing production of codes), relating to meaningful connections between codes (code clustering) to finalise theme development
- Report (progress to demonstrate how these descriptions and themes (and sub-themes) will be depicted in the qualitative case study report)

Coding

The process of coding (and theme development) is regarded as dynamic and might advance throughout the analytical process (Braun et al. 2019). Advancing through the analysis leads to further familiarity with the data, which brings about a deeper interpretation of new patterns of meaning as themes were generated.

Coding refers to a method of categorising the data by creating a term to represent each category and bracketing sections of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:193). This is also regarded as labelling.

Themes

After the coding process, patterns were identified and codes were formulated as themes. Themes that appear frequently were identified (Fouché et al., 2021:866-867). I read all consolidated transcripts, field notes and document analysis notes several times in order to identify keywords, sentences and similarities. Similar data were grouped to form categories. These categories were used to formulate the themes and then in repeating the process as data analysis in qualitative research is an iterative process, sub-themes were developed. Many of the codes were allocated to one common theme where patterns were identified. I also checked whether themes made sense across the entire data set (Fouché et al., 2021:-868) as well as which area of the research questions it addressed.

4.7.1 Document analysis

The document analysis provided the researcher with the context in which the Grade 3 teachers who participated in the study were functioning. Analysing documents is a methodical approach that allows for the unbiased drawing of conclusions from the written content. (Fouché et al., 2021:733). A document analysis guide was used to ensure a systematic approach was followed to analyse the documents.

Such complementary data collection methods are credible because they boost the triangulation of data (Gitomer & Crouse 2019). Thus, several useful documents were analysed to deepen an understanding of the context of the study findings. The documents selected are listed below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

List of documents selected for analysis

Public documents	Personal documents
National Policy Guide for Junior Primary	Creative writing activities of Grade 3 learners
The integrated planning manual for Grade 3	Creative writing books for Grade 3 learners
First language syllabus	
Continuous Assessment Record Form Grade 3	

In Table 4.1, both personal and public documents that were scrutinised are listed. After reviewing each document a few times, the notes on the elements which seemed most appropriate to the research questions were recorded to address the following:

- Correlation between learner activities and learning outcomes as set out in the syllabus.
- The strengths of the status quo.
- Possibilities for change or reinforcement to enhance optimal learning.
- Skills needed to teach writing effectively.
- Guidance on strategies and methodologies to teach creative writing.
- Guidance on the marking and assessment of writing.
- Correlation between national policy documents and syllabus assessment and the Self-Regulation Strategy Development (SRSD).

4.7.2. Focus group interviews

The six teachers who took part in this study were given pseudonyms to protect their identities, namely School 1 with Teachers X, Y and Z and School 2 with Teachers A, B and C. Interest in the implied meanings of the data gathered motivated the

researcher to transcribe the interviews verbatim by typing them. The process of transcribing the raw data while also pondering on what was recorded in the reflective journal led to grappling with the data on a deep level.

Field notes taken while reading interview transcripts were examined similarly to how transcriptions of audio recordings had been done. As a result, field notes and data transcripts from audio recordings were re-read, and the results of document analysis and literature discussion were then compared. The next chapter of this study presents and discusses the findings.

The period of intense review and coding was followed by the creation of categories for the themes. Thereafter, much re-reading occurred until a hierarchy of themes was generated (Byrne, 2019; 2022.) Subsequently, selective coding was used to determine which details from the data were most relevant to the study. Four themes, namely, teacher beliefs and perspectives on writing instruction, challenges in writing instruction, current practices in writing instruction, and mitigating challenges in writing instruction, are presented, interpreted and discussed (cf. 5.2; 5.3; 5.4). Finally, the data from the document analysis, lesson observations, and three focused interviews were triangulated to increase the credibility of the findings.

4.7.3 Lesson observations

As part of the data collection, 20 creative writing lessons were observed at the two selected schools, namely, School 1 with Teachers X, Y and Z and School 2 with Teachers A, B and C.

Creative writing lessons were mostly taught at the end of the week after break, but some teachers moved it to Wednesdays when the Friday was disrupted by events such as Casual Days, Zonal Athletics and Independence Day celebrations. Photographs were taken of the chalkboard displays and the writing activities after the lessons. Observation can be enhanced by visual sources (Fouché et al., 2021:750).

The next paragraph presents the credibility and trustworthiness of the research as well as the ethical considerations implemented.

4.8 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

The authority of qualitative research is embedded in its credibility (Tracy, 2013:235 in Fouché et al., 2021:843). Therefore, every effort was made by the researcher who employed the following strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of this study: member checking, triangulation, peer debriefing and a prolonged stay in the field.

The validity of qualitative research is described in terms of the trustworthiness, authenticity, credibility or representativeness of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The strength of qualitative research is embedded in validity and in establishing whether the conclusions and discoveries are in alignment with the perspective of the researcher, the participant, and the reader of the research. Consequently, the researcher employed validity strategies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) such as reflexivity, triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement in the field and an audit trail which are discussed in this section.

4.8.1 Researcher stance and reflexivity

In qualitative research, the researcher plays the lead role in collecting data and is thus regarded as an essential research instrument (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Haenssger, 2019; Yin, 2011; Fouché et al., 2021). Consequently, it is impossible as a researcher, and a social being, not to come up with one's own beliefs, values and outlook on life. Understanding the researcher's input in order to purposefully make meaning of the data collected is referred to as reflexivity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:183-184).

Therefore, I made the effort to minimise how my experience and training as a teacher might influence the interpretation of the data I collected. Primarily, I used structured guides during observations, interviews and even in the document analysis to remain focused. Additionally, I made field notes and had informal conversations to double-check whether data was captured correctly and if I understood it correctly. Member checking was also utilised to ensure that I remained focussed on the findings.

Personal characteristics as a researcher played a major role in the process of conducting this study. I established good rapport with the teachers and was able to share my knowledge of SRSD with teachers and started creating a PLC with them to

empower them to sustain themselves. In line with findings by Danner et al. (2018) that show that participants are more likely to show up or engage if the research addresses their interests. I showed a genuine interest in their challenges and committed to presenting a workshop to enhance their teaching strategies. Therefore, good rapport was established and both schools are open for collaborating and working toward enhancing teaching and learning.

Creswell & Creswell (2018:184) regard reflexivity as the deep examination of the self as a valid practice for researchers to self-profess their views, values and predispositions. Therefore, I kept a reflexive journal where all the data collection strategies, details of dates of interviews with participants, reflections after observations, and examples of learner's written work were photocopied after permission had been granted. The researcher is predisposed to having empathy towards the demands made on teachers. However, I deliberately attempted not to find excuses for teachers to portray them in a positive light but followed the evidence which clearly showed a lack of curriculum knowledge. In conclusion, it was the keeping of a journal, the making of fieldnotes and member checking that ensured credible research findings. In addition to this, software was used to analyse the data to strengthen the trustworthiness of research.

4.8.2 Prolonged engagement in field or research site

The researcher spent sufficient time with the participants in their classrooms when lessons were observed as well as when conducting the focus group interviews. The data that was required was obtained and double-checked. Determined engagement with the participants at the research site adds precision to the research (Fouché et al., 2021:847). Therefore, the different writing activities that teachers mentioned were looked for in the learner notebooks to corroborate the findings. The researcher respectfully waited on the teacher's availability and adhered to the agreed timeslots to maintain good communication when analysing personal documents like learner creative writing books. Even when double-checking whether the data collected was truthfully portraying what the participant meant, an effort was made not to inconvenience participants. The waiting period was rather used as time spent on reflection and making fieldnotes, even if meant waiting in the staffroom or in the car.

Therefore, all decisions were made only after careful consideration, so as not to impose or intrude as a researcher.

4.8.3 Use of peer debriefing

According to Fouché et al. (2021), this refers for example to peers, colleagues or research companions acting like a soundboard for the researcher to share insights and ideas. Regularly check-ins with colleagues and one specific research companion with whom insights were shared provided a critical review.

4.8.4 Member checks/follow-up interview

In formal and informal ways, participants were asked if data was captured correctly. They correlated the data with the findings and critically reviewed the final report as guided by Fouché et al. (2021:848).

4.8.5 Create an audit trail

In order to make the study understandable, the audit trail provides an overview of how the participants and the researcher interacted to make meaning of the findings. As mentioned earlier, the audit trail's main function is to prove that the results, interpretations and conclusions are verified by the data (Fouché et al., 2021).

Field notes are generally suggested in qualitative research as a means of recording desired contextual data (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). These authors also claim that in the growing practice of data sharing and secondary analysis, field notes safeguard the rich context beyond the original research team. Therefore, the researcher recorded field notes during lesson observations by using an observation guide, by note taking and using a voice recorder to ensure that extensive notes are secured. Firstly, field notes were compiled during creative writing lessons as a record of what happened chronologically in class, and secondly, after the lessons had been observed as reflections of what had occurred (Christensen et al., 2015; Fouché et al., 2021).

4.8.6 Provision of thick descriptions

The verbatim statements help readers to understand the setting and context. A thick description purports the essence of bringing the reader into the world of research. This description may carry readers to the setting and provide the reader with an element of shared experiences (Fouché et al., 2021:841). Therefore, the researcher attempted to provide the context and make the research real with thick descriptions to bring the lifeworld of participants to the fore.

4.8.7 Triangulation

To augment the trustworthiness of the findings, the triangulation technique was utilised; to use more than one research instrument. In this context, focus group interviews, lesson observations and document study were used as data collection techniques. In addition to this, the chalkboard displays and the learner activities were photographed to back up the observations. Different data sources of information were triangulated by exploring evidence from the sources and using it to construct a comprehensible validation for themes. If themes are recognised based on uniting numerous sources of data or viewpoints of participants, then they can add validity to the research (Haenssgen, 2019). Themes were recognised because numerous sources like the lesson observation, the learner scripts and the teacher comments revealed the same issue. The issue was the lack of vocabulary and basic skills which emerged as the theme called poor oral skills.

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Adhering to ethical considerations in all research where human participants are involved is extremely important (Fouché et al., 2021). These include permission informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, trust and caring, which are discussed below.

The researcher committed to cooperation, trust and openness with the teachers involved and strove to have meaningful, open discussions with each participant. The final report of this investigation was available to all participants and they could review it before it would be released. Participants were also debriefed when the research ended.

The following ethical considerations and how they are linked to the study were discussed before the data collection process began: permission, anonymity, informed consent, confidentiality and harm to respondents.

4.9.1 Permission

It is well documented that researchers require the necessary permission from relevant authorities before an investigation begins (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Haenssger, 2019; Fouché et al. 2021). All letters requesting ethical clearance are included in the appendices (Appendices A to I). To secure the approval for data collection, the following measures were taken:

- Ethical clearance was first sought from the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee of the University of South Africa before carrying out the study.
- Permission was requested from the Ministry of Education and the Directorate of Education in the Khomas region.
- Permission was requested from the principals of the two selected primary schools.
- Permission was requested from each Grade 3 teacher who was willing to take part in the study. They granted interviews, availed learner notebooks and allowed lesson observation.
- Permission was sought from parents for the researcher to only observe their children in the classroom.
- Assent was sought from children to observe them in the classroom.
- COVID-19 hygiene protocols were also discussed with authorities before permission was granted for data collection. Protocols were adhered to during data collection.

4.9.2 Informed consent

After securing consent from the Ministry of Education, the regional director and the principals, it was essential to obtain participant permission before the data collection process began. Christensen et al. (2015:125) emphasise that participants should be

well briefed on every facet of the research. Fouché et al. (2021:287-288) define informed consent as ethical consent, which allows participants to participate or not to participate after the purpose of the study has been explained to them. In this study, the researcher adhered to informed consent and participants were given the option to choose to participate or not after the purpose of the study and been explained to them.

4.9.3 Confidentiality

The researcher ensures the participants keep their identities and responses private and make use of pseudonyms for participants and sites (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:95 ;Haenssger, 2019:125). The researcher assured participants that the data would not be used against them and that their responses would be kept confidential, although the information obtained from their responses was used for research purposes.

4.9.4 Anonymity

Anonymity was ensured to protect participants' 'right to privacy'. The researcher reassured each participant that their identities, viewpoints and ideas would remain private. This includes the aspects they stated in the unstructured interviews and during the observations, as well as the assertion that no one would link a particular response to a participant. Pseudonyms were used to present and discuss the findings, namely, School 1 with Teachers X, Y and Z (TX, TY and TZ) and School 2 with Teachers A, B and C (TA, TB, TC). No one was coerced to participate in the research; it was entirely voluntary. Participants made a choice and well-considered decision regarding their potential involvement in the study as a result of the researcher's detailed disclosure of the study's details, which allowed them to fully understand the inquiry (Haenssger, 2019:129; Fouché et al., 2021:289-290). The consent was done by signature and signed consent forms are kept in a locked file.

4.9.5 Beneficence

Beneficence should be based on the well-being of participants and therefore implies a commitment to ensure minimum discomfort and maximise possible positive outcomes after the research process (Fouché et al., 2021:284).

Therefore, in this research, the questions asked were not sensitive enough to cause psychological, social and physical harm. The questions focused on creative writing instruction. In light of the COVID-19 aftermath, the researcher assured the participants of observing all safety protocols such as regular wearing of a face mask and regular hand-washing before entering their classrooms for observations or examining learner notebooks. The researcher complied with the teachers' request to present a workshop to enhance strategies to teach creative writing. The workshop was an interactive session between the researcher and the participants on introducing SRSD as a strategy to teach creative writing. Teachers expressed their gratitude because budget restraints hinder regular workshops and as mentioned earlier the continuous profession development (CPD) programme is not fully functional in Namibia at the time of writing.

4.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the research design and methodology that was used in this study. It included the rationale behind the qualitative case study and interpretive paradigm, the selection of the research site and sampling, participants, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations and methods for assuring the credibility and trustworthiness of the research. The researcher explained how participants were selected, the value they brought to the study, as well as the procedures followed when collecting data using observation, a document study, and focus interviews. Ethical principles such as gaining permission from schools, a guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality, informed consent and caring for participants were discussed. The researcher presented the techniques used in the study to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, namely credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. The categories and themes represented major ideas that emerged from the study. The next chapter comprises the presentation of these findings.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter described the research design, approach and methodology used in this study. It included the rationale behind framing this research in an exploratory qualitative case study within an interpretive paradigm. The selection of the research site and sampling, participants, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations and methods for assuring the credibility and trustworthiness of the research were discussed. The researcher explained how participants were selected, and the value they brought to the study, as well as the procedures followed during the multi-method data collection using observation, a document study, and focus interviews. This chapter presents the findings from the focus group interviews with Grade 3 teachers, lesson observations and document analysis followed by a discussion thereof. The findings from these three data-gathering methods provided evidence of how creative writing is taught. The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the data of this qualitative case study to answer the research questions which seek to explore the efficacy of strategies employed to teach creative writing skills in Grade 3. The rationale behind the data collection was to give credence to the realisation that teaching creative writing in the junior primary grades poses challenges that are to be addressed. To make meaning of the data collected, a reflexive thematic analysis was applied to highlight exactly those aspects that may be problematic in the teaching of creative writing to arrive at the results that would lead to awareness and possible solutions to the issue. The overall aim of the study was to explore the teaching strategies employed by teachers in teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3.

Research question:

How effective are teaching strategies that are applied by teachers in teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3?

Sub-questions

In an attempt to address the main research question, the following sub-questions emerged:

1. What are teachers' perspectives on teaching creative writing in Grade 3?
2. What evidence-based strategies are used to teach creative writing in Grade 3?
3. What are teachers' perspectives on employing Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) in the teaching of creative writing skills in Grade 3?
4. How can creating a PLC within the school serve as an intervention/recommendation to improve current ways of teaching writing in Grade 3?

Furthermore, the study aimed to:

- explore teachers' perspectives on teaching creative writing in Grade 3.
- explore methods that are used to teach creative writing in Grade 3.
- investigate teachers' perspectives on employing Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) in the teaching of creative writing skills in Grade 3
- investigate what role a Professional Learning Community (PLC) may play as an intervention to improve current ways of teaching creative writing in Grade 3.

Since this study was aligned with Vygotsky's sociocultural (1978, 1987) and Bandura's social cognition (1986,1997) theory, the current chapter was guided by these pertinent theories which were discussed in the theoretical framework (Chapter 2):

As elucidated in Chapter 3, both these language learning theorists converge in their concern for the utilisation of prior knowledge to construct meaning from textual content, as well as in recognising the interplay between context, cultural background, and meaning extraction from written text. How a child or a teacher interacts with the written word is situated in the cultural background, social environment and self-efficacy. As indicated in Chapter 2, perception, attention, and memory are examples of cognitive processes that support belief in one's ability to execute assignments. Teaching creative writing in effective ways is a major assignment for the creative

writing teacher. Therefore, the teacher's perception of their ability to reach a particular performance level is influenced by a variety of elements, including their knowledge and abilities, situational context, and their cognitive interpretation of prior performances. This is also true for the learners who are tasked to complete a writing activity and the link between teacher perceptions and learner performance has long been established (Eun, 2019)

Literature emphasises the need for teachers to be well-informed about writing development in children and strategies to teach writing (Faulkner et al., 2010; NIED, 2012; McKeown, FitzPatrick, Brown, Brindle, Owens & Hendrick, 2019; Graham, 2019). Therefore, the importance of capacitating teachers is highlighted in this research. Moreover, one verified way to ensure that teachers remain knowledgeable is to refer to the findings in research (Graham, 2018). Hence, attempting to bridge the gap between research and practice can be seen as making research findings part of teacher training and practice. Consequently, it makes sense to compare the characteristics of a research-based strategy like Self-Regulation Strategy Development (SRSD) to the creative writing points in the document study to determine how it ties in with the curriculum and Namibian context. In qualitative data analysis, all the data collected through the different instruments are united in the process of making meaning of it (Fouché et al., 2021:860).

The instruments used to gather data included lesson observations, document analysis and two focus group interviews at each research site. In addition to this, two focus group interviews were held after a writing workshop on SRSD was introduced to the participants. The documents and texts analysed were the national policy guide for junior primary, the syllabus for Grade 3 (first language), the Junior Primary Integrated Manual for Grade 3, and the sampled learner scripts. This provided the framework of what is exactly expected from the Grade 3 teacher and learners in terms of creative writing. Hereafter, the Self-Regulation Strategy Development (SRSD) stages were placed within that framework to answer the research question.

Another category of analysis was lesson observations. This included at least two creative writing lesson observations in three of the Grade 3 classrooms at the two selected schools.

In addition to this, data were also obtained through two focus group interviews with the Grade 3 teachers of each school. The final focus group interview was done after the workshop referred to in 4.9.5. This workshop was done by the researcher and participants who engaged actively in it. The Grade 3s were selected because this is the final year in the junior primary phase, and learners would be able to cope well with a visitor in the class and the last few months of the year to ensure that learners had ample time to develop their writing. The presentation of the data is followed by their interpretation. Thereafter the chapter is summarised. The documents were analysed then the researcher triangulated the data from the document analysis, focused interviews and lesson observations to increase the credibility of the findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2014). The themes which emerged from the document analysis were applied as guidance to frame the questions for the focused interviews and the observation guide.

In the following sections, the findings are presented in accordance with the identified themes. After presenting each of the themes, they are discussed through the Vygotskian lens of social constructivism, as discussed in Chapter 2, as a framework that underscores this study.

Furthermore, relevant literature is interwoven, as reviewed in Chapter 3 of this research. The researcher then triangulated findings from document analysis with findings from the focused interviews and lesson observations.

5.2 Findings from the focus group interviews

The study explored strategies for teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3 in two schools in Windhoek. There were several follow-up interviews/conversations which were conducted with some participants for member checking. The following subsection presents the demographic information and the themes which were developed from the analysed data, respectively.

5.2.1 Demographical information of participants

The six teachers who took part in this study were given pseudonyms to protect their identities. Their demographic information is presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Demographic profile of teachers

Pseudonyms	Age	Gender	Years of Teaching	Qualification	Languages Trained to Teach	Mother Tongue	Culture Group
S 1							
TX	48	F	10	Diploma + Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE)	English Afrikaans Rukwangali	Rukwangali	Kavango
TY	25	F	2	Basic Education Teaching Diploma	English + Afrikaans	Otjiherero	Herero
TZ	38	F	9	Diploma in Junior Primary Education	Afrikaans + English	Afrikaans	Afrikaner
S 2							
TA	31	F	9	B.Ed. (Pre- and Lower Primary)	English + Afrikaans	Afrikaans	Coloured
TB	27	M	5	Diploma in Junior Primary Education	English + Afrikaans	Nama	Griqua
TC	36	F	10	Diploma in Junior Primary Education	English + Afrikaans	Otjiherero	Herero

Table 5.1 indicates that there is only one male and five females. It is noteworthy to mention that this is not uncommon as male teachers in Early Childhood Education remain a scarcity. This is a global issue and many researchers have called for gender equality in this area (Mathwasa & Sibanda, 2021). The ages of participants range from 25 to 48 years and they have all been teaching in the junior primary phase for at least two years. The focused group responses are shown below in Table 5.2. The teachers from S1 (School 1) are participants, TX, TY and TZ while TB and TC are from S2 (School 2). Each school had two focused interviews of which the final focused interview was conducted after the workshop.

Table 5.2. Participant responses

Focus group interview#1
Participant responses
Q: What do you find challenging when you teach creative writing?
TZ: "Learners do not like to participate in writing - they always moan. I must admit, I don't like it either because it is such a struggle".

TX: We need more time actually because we have a lot of things to cover in one week also, a lot of things to cover. We still have learners in Grade 3 who cannot write at all ... English is not our 1st language, but we must do it. But now you struggle with learners without vocabulary so you have to build that first and repeat it during the writing lesson, so you try to reinforce it with a relevant picture.”

TY: “You know, so the other thing that makes writing very difficult is, we focus more on the language, let's say this week we are teaching about verbs, we focus more on the verbs than creative writing itself...”

TX: “We don't know how to assess their work, so we just try...spelling, punctuation” while Participant TX focused elsewhere when marking, “I'd rather focus more on the creativity than the correct spelling of words and punctuation marks.”

TZ: “Afrikaans is not their 2nd language, but we must follow the syllabus” “We teach vocabulary, integrate the grammar we did (punctuation) and after the oral discussion, they write. We support the writing, check whether they started and assist with spelling.”

TX: “We were never taught how to teach writing”

TZ: “The basic skills are not in place – going to higher order things like creating stories is a tall order.”

TX: “We need to know what creative writing actually entails...”

TY: “...if the instruction says, 'write a story', that is the instruction, and this child has no clue, even how to start it, just to build sentences. So, it is very challenging at that point because you find a learner that will write something, then this one will just write for you things that don't make sense and you cannot give them a mark for that, and also it will keep you behind because this child needs a mark, you cannot give a zero mark either.”

TX: “They are confused because they did not master it. To them, I can just write for the sake of writing. They don't know where the capital letter must be, or how to start the name of a person, of an animal, of things because they were not taught properly in Grade 1 and Grade 2. Learners were not taught properly in Grades 1 and 2 and now, here we are... they are here in Grade 3 without mastering the basic competencies - and nowadays the parent must give permission if the child has to repeat the grade - so we are very demotivated, what is the point of me being the teacher when the parent must decide...”

TY: “We were never taught how to teach writing - just a few ideas were given, but now you struggle with learners without vocabulary, so you have to build that first and repeat it during the writing lesson, so you try to reinforce it with a relevant picture...We still have learners in Grade 3 who cannot write at all. ...So, if the instruction says 'write a story', that is the instruction, and this child has no clue, even how to start it, just to build sentences.”

TA: We don't really have resources like nice storybooks. Some textbooks are outdated or not published anymore...everything we do and have is from our pockets...Wi-Fi is only available in certain areas. We have no support – Wi-Fi is only available in certain areas of the school, and we struggle with a lack of books and resources in general.”

TB: "We sometimes copy stories or activities from textbooks" Colour paper is all we get... I use the textbook ideas, and Internet prompts and follow the Enviro theme..."

TC: "For reading, we start with the sounds, incorporate the pictures...but for writing, the guidelines are just broad...just creative writing."

TA: "...like for reading we start with the sounds, incorporate the pictures...but for writing, the guidelines are just broad...just creative writing".

TC: We were never really taught how to teach writing and the thing from the syllabus is too much - you end up choosing fun things like making an invitation".

TC: "Like for me...I just don't know where to begin, I don't know whether I am doing the right thing or the wrong thing. Cause sometimes that child who is struggling never improves. So, I don't know... maybe we need a guideline on how to teach writing."

Q: What do you look at when you assess writing?

TY: "It depends on the teacher..."

TX: "When we are writing, if you have more pictures for them to draw and colour, they focus...I'd rather focus more on the creativity than the correct spelling of words and punctuation marks".

TY: "We don't know how to assess their work, so we just try...spelling and punctuation."

TA: "How their ideas follow one another..."

TB: "Spelling and punctuation."

Q: What about using strategies like shared writing?

TX: "Shared writing is a great idea but takes a lot of time - learners are already having a backlog - after Covid-19 they are behind. "

TA: "I prepared the shared writing lesson after I read up on it a bit. I enjoyed it. It takes a lot of time...yeh, I do like using it and will do it now and then..."

TY: Shared writing is a great idea but takes a lot of time - learners already have a backlog - after Covid-19, they are behind.

Focus group interview #2

Q: How did you experience this introduction to the SRSD workshop?

TC: "This is practical and we can use it, not those workshops where we sleep."

TA: "I will use it – even to assess my students, it is a great tool, I never had a tool before."

TC: "Definitely great ideas to explore and implement, I will check out the online training."

TX: "I am going to try out TREE for opinion and also POW + CSPACE and POW + WWW + 2W + 2H for the narrative."

TY: "As a young teacher, this was an eye-opener - the knowledge I have gained will help me to guide my learners."

TB: "This will help me to help my learners to organise their thoughts."

TZ: "Yes, I have also learnt more about how to assess learners."

TY: "Now I know how to assist my learners to write good essays."

TZ: "I will have to translate it or find a way to use it in Afrikaans...but it sounds fun and is a very good strategy."

5.2.2 Themes

After coding, the search for patterns and relationships between codes across the data set begun. Everything in the data set that addressed the research question was scrutinised. This led to developing themes and sub-themes to describe what the findings entailed regarding how creative writing is taught. The analysis of the focus group interview transcripts contained different codes which were linked (code clustering according to Fouché et al. 2021:863) to portray a preliminary understanding of the relationships between codes. The iterative process of interpretation thereof then led to the development of the themes and sub-themes as depicted below in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Teacher perceptions and beliefs	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Lack of motivation2. Inadequate training3. Misinterpretation /Lack of knowledge of the curriculum and syllabus4. First and second language teaching
Challenges when teaching creative writing	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Poor oral language skills of learners2. Lack of reading resources
Lack of diverse strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Lack of strategies to teach creative writing.2. Lack of strategies to assess creative writing.

5.2.3 Discussion of findings from focused interviews

The next section provides an overview of each theme as outlined in the table above. Each theme is followed by a description of the sub-themes.

5.2.3.1 Theme 1: Teacher perceptions and beliefs

The teachers believed that their learners come to Grade 3 with an existing backlog. What also emerged is that teachers hold their own beliefs and perceptions about research and, as in this case, about writing strategies. These beliefs impact the choices they make when teaching. The general feeling among the participants is that they are inadequately prepared to teach creative writing. Teachers find it challenging as there is no systematic approach as noted in the response of Participant TC below: *“Like for me...I just don't know where to begin, I don't know whether I am doing the right thing or the wrong thing. ‘Cause sometimes that child that is struggling, never improves. So, I don't know... maybe we need a guideline on how to teach writing.”*

Further, Participant TA observed: *“...like for reading we start with the sounds, incorporate the pictures...but for writing, the guidelines are just broad...just creative writing”*.

The underlying assumption is that writing instruction does not have a clear path of progression, which is a huge gap that hinders progress. It also provides a possible reason as to why lessons seemed to be starting anew every week...the only difference is the theme or topic and the type of activity. This lack of progression was also visible during lesson observations. Teacher perceptions and beliefs regarding writing are very important as they definitely impact writing instruction (Hall, Gao & Hirsch, 2021) and in this case study it came to light that the teachers perceived writing as challenging and unrewarding to teach because they do not see learner progress. Besides, the learners' basic language skills are not in place and those lagging behind struggle to catch up. Consequently, the writing period seemed to be the least liked one.

Three sub-themes were developed:

- Lack of motivation
- Inadequate training
- Misinterpretation of the policy documents

1. Lack of motivation

The teachers believed that the learners do not like writing and their negativity affects the enthusiasm (or lack thereof) with which they teach. This is reflected in the responses below:

Participant TZ: *“Learners do not like to participate in writing - they always moan - I must admit, I don’t like it either because it is such a struggle.”*

Participant TB: *“We sometimes copy stories or activities from textbooks”*

The poor learner success in creative writing led to a lack of motivation to teach creative writing in exciting ways. This lack of motivation spilled over to the approach to the lessons and the teachers resorted to using mainly one method of flashcards and story writing. It is also evident in the lesson observations where the similarities can be spotted in the board displays. Other studies found that whenever teachers were more confident about teaching writing, they spent more time teaching it and learners spent more time on writing in the classrooms of such teachers (De Smedt et al., 2016; Rietdijk et al., 2018; Hsiang et al., 2020). It seemed as if both teachers and learners were just doing the writing double period for the sake of completing what was required of them. However, they are in fact not doing what is required as stipulated in the policy documents which is explained later on.

Teachers regard learners as reluctant to engage in writing and they blame this reluctance on the fact that basic skills were not mastered in the previous grades. Participant TZ regarded this as a challenge when teaching creative writing:

“The basic skills are not in place – going to higher order things like creating stories is a tall order.”

As mentioned earlier, the poor progress and learner reluctance that followed, demotivated teachers as Participant TX summarised:

“They are confused because they did not master it. To them, I can just write for the sake of writing. They don’t know where the capital letter must be, or how to start the name of a person, of an animal, of things because they were not taught properly in Grade 1 and Grade 2. Learners were not taught properly in Grades

1 and 2 and now, here we are... they are here in Grade 3 without mastering the basic competencies - and nowadays the parent must give permission if the child has to repeat the grade - so we are very demotivated, what is the point of me being the teacher when the parent must decide..."

In addition to the lack of motivation, the policy on automatic promotion affects the outlook and perceptions of the teachers. These perceptions and feelings of being overlooked play an important role in how teachers regard teaching. It has a negative impact on teaching and consequently on learning. As mentioned before in Chapter 1, research emphasises the link between teacher beliefs and teaching practice (Hall et al. 2021).

2. Inadequate training

During the discussion, teachers shared the feeling of being poorly equipped to teach writing effectively and they also found marking and assessing writing overwhelming. Participant TX said:

"We need to know what creative writing actually entails..."

Teachers expressed their desire for some training to guide them on how to approach the teaching of creative writing and they lamented how their training lacked explicit teaching strategies. Participant TC said:

"We were never really taught how to teach writing and the thing from the syllabus is too much - you end up choosing fun things like making an invitation".

After the SRSD introduction workshop, Participant TA said:

"I will use it – even to assess my students, it is a great tool, I never had a tool before."

This was also mentioned in the first focussed interview when participants revealed that they were unsure how to assess creative writing meaningfully. It is also evident in the document analysis where books revealed ambiguous marking with little feedback and no corrections.

3. Misinterpretation of the curriculum and syllabus

The perception held by teachers that the syllabus only states that creative writing should be done, is actually not truthfully reflecting what is captured in the policy guides. The syllabus provides a framework of what content should be covered as well as what types of writing activities should be done. However, the syllabus must be read in conjunction with the integrated planning manual and the national policy guide for junior primary. Hence, the perception that there is not adequate guidance and direction provided from the Ministry of Education, can be regarded as a misconception. The comments from participants lead to the assumption that teachers are inclined to believe in a lack of guidance. Participant TY said:

“We don't know how to assess their work, so we just try...spelling, punctuation.”

Participant TX also responded on the matter of assessment:

“I'd rather focus more on the creativity than the correct spelling of words and punctuation marks”.

This implies a lack of understanding of the curricular documents and the guidelines in the policy documents pertaining to marking which is perhaps why it was not implemented at times. The guidance and information relating to creative writing as listed in Table 5.1 was not taken into consideration. Participant TA observed:

“We need to know what creative writing actually entails.”

Moreover, Participant TC said:

“Yes, like for reading we start with the sounds, incorporate the pictures...but for writing the guidelines are just broad...just creative writing.”

These comments indicate a lack of familiarity with the curriculum documents, and it seems as if participants only have a partial view and not a comprehensive understanding of what is outlined in the documents. The approaches, guidelines and practical considerations seemed to be overlooked.

The urgency to ensure that all teachers obtain a comprehensive understanding and sufficient practice of what the curriculum entails is echoed in research (Taylor, 2019; De Clercq et al. 2018) as also mentioned in Chapter 3.

First and second language teaching

Interpreting the relationships between codes and groups of codes brought about the development of this sub-theme. Namibian learners who are not native English speakers are required to write according to the 1st language syllabus which leads to further hindering learner progress. In other words, the learners whose home languages are not either English or Afrikaans are at a disadvantage because these two languages are offered as languages of instruction and language of learning.

TX stated:

“They have no clue totally, what is that. English is not our 1st language but we must do it...”

The same concern applied to the Afrikaans class as another participant, TZ, pointed out, *“Afrikaans is not their 2nd language but we must follow the syllabus”*.

In addition to these struggles, the cognitive input required to do the writing activities outlined in the First Language class is so much higher than what is expected from Second Language learners. This indicates that the syllabi do not cater for the language backgrounds of learners and hence most significant changes that can be brought about are the ones made by the teacher.

The teacher as the agent of change can therefore ensure that their pedagogical content knowledge, content knowledge and curriculum knowledge are relevant and viable (Taylor, 2019) to ensure optimal learning. Teachers are required to give comprehensive comments and advice to learners, especially non-native speakers to further their writing skills (Lincoln & Idris, 2015). Ulu (2019) acknowledges that teacher comments and encouragement have the potential to ignite a love for developing a writing habit.

The rationale for first and second language teaching is the same as described on page 6 in the English First Language syllabus (NIED, 2015) and page 3 in the English Second Language syllabus (NIED, 2015). The differences are primarily captured in the approach to teaching and learning writing. However, research has found that both first and second language writers mostly apply similar exercises before, during and after writing activities although their thought processes may differ (Lincoln & Idris, 2015). In light of these findings and the fact that learners are most probably not taught

in their mother tongue, the researcher does not see why all teachers cannot teach all as outlined in the First Language syllabus, regardless of the teacher's mother tongue. Teaching the concept, the skill can be transferred to all the languages in which learners and teachers are fluent. Therein, when the focus is more on the process of writing, learners may potentially all receive a richer learning experience.

The language policy in Namibia is a complex issue in education. According to the language policy, home languages are the preferred medium of instruction for Grades 1 to 3. Then in Grade 4, all learners transition to English as the medium of instruction (The Republic of Namibia, Ministry of Education & Culture, 1993). However, in practice, many classes have learners with different home languages with the dilemma that only one of these can be the medium of instruction. Subsequently, many Namibian learners are not being taught in their mother tongue in the formative years of education (Wikan & Mostert, 2011; Chavez, 2016; Van Wyk & Mostert, 2016).

However, nothing prevents language teachers from using SRSD as an approach as it is not limited to either first or second language teaching; they are skills that can be embraced in any multilingual setting.

5.2.3.2 Theme 2: Challenges when teaching writing

Among the challenges that teachers highlighted was the issue that out of the nine periods allocated for language teaching, only one or two are purposed for teaching writing. Therefore, one hour per week is provided for both writing instruction and engaging in writing. However, good writing programmes propose at least one hour a day in the primary grades because writing is such a complex skill and learners sharpen their skills (Graham et al.2012). The need for more time is also cited in Participant TX's response when asked what was challenging when teaching writing:

"We need more time actually because we have a lot of things to cover in one week also, a lot of things to cover."

Teacher challenges are intertwined with the other themes but in an effort to give more weight to the burden they experienced, the following sub-themes were generated:

- poor oral language skills of learners
- a lack of reading resources

1. Poor oral language of learners

The teachers complained that the basic skills were not in place and referred to poor spelling, syntax and lack of vocabulary, which led to generating this sub-theme as a lack of oral language skills. Besides, oral language skills are defined as “the ability to use words to communicate ideas and thoughts and to use language as a tool to communicate to others” (Bradfield et al. 2014); vocabulary and grammatical knowledge (Kim & Park, 2019). Oral language is the foundation of learning a language, usually acquired in a child’s HL and “consists of phonology, grammar (syntactic), morphology, vocabulary, semantics, discourse and pragmatics” (Crawford-Brooke 2013: 1). Participant TX responded:

“But now you struggle with learners without vocabulary so you have to build that first and repeat it during the writing lesson, so you try to reinforce it with a relevant picture.”

Oral skills are essential to translate thoughts into written texts and it was evident that teachers made up for the lack thereof, by constantly supplying theme words on flashcards supported by pictures as discussed later under observations. This is also reiterated by Participant TY:

“We still have learners in Grade 3 who cannot write at all. So, if the instruction says 'write a story', that is the instruction, and this child has no clue, even how to start it, just to build sentences.”

Still, the lack of vocabulary, poor spelling and syntax cannot be forcing teachers to settle for basic outcomes. Teachers should be aware that although learners have different strengths and abilities, they should still uphold the high aspirations of their learners (Holtman, 2018). The lack of excitement and buzz in the junior primary classroom is worrisome. Classroom practices and classroom procedures play substantial roles in children's learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

The curriculum documents underline that teaching should be learner-centred; however, it seems as if its implementation is limited to the question-and-answer method. Learner-centred classrooms are to be where they are motivated to learn as mentioned earlier in Chapter 1. Learner-centred teachers explore ethically responsible ideas to include learners in decision making such as giving learners some options

between creative assignments or topics (Du Plessis, 2020). As mentioned in Chapter 1, this also ties in with ESD and is more competence-based than knowledge-based.

2. Lack of reading resources

A lack of reading sources is a serious problem because learners need to explore written text and they need to read for enjoyment to expand their vocabulary as well. Participant TB stated the following,

“Colour paper is all we get... I use the textbook ideas, and Internet prompts and follow the Enviro theme...”

This response is worrisome and although teachers realise the need for good, quality texts, they already feel burdened as Participant TA pointed out,

We don't really have resources like nice storybooks. Some textbooks are outdated or not published anymore...everything we do and have is from our pockets...”

Research emphasises quality texts and effective teaching as the key to success (Krashen, 2011; Culham, 2014). Furthermore, reading is a substantial part of learning to write. Reading and writing are interrelated; hence the need to ensure learners enjoy sufficient exposure to good books or texts. Participant TA elaborated,

“WiFi is only available in certain areas. We have no support - WiFi is only available in certain areas of the school, and we struggle with a lack of books and resources in general.”

5.2.3.3 Theme 3: Lack of diverse strategies

Participants could not discuss their strategies in detail and rather lamented that they did not receive adequate training and because of the poor learner progress it became a challenge to teach writing.

One participant, TZ, observed,

“We teach vocabulary, integrate the grammar we did (punctuation) and after the oral discussion, they write. We support the writing, check whether they started and assist with spelling.”

In an attempt to remind teachers about the strategies as outlined in the *Integrated Manual for Grade 3*, the question on shared writing was asked:

TA: *“I prepared the shared writing lesson after I read up on it a bit. I enjoyed it. It takes a lot of time...yeh, I do like using it and will do it now and then....”*

TY: *Shared writing is a great idea but takes a lot of time - learners already have a backlog - after Covid-19, they are behind.*

Therefore, a need for different strategies was identified and the following sub-themes were generated:

- lack of strategies to teach creative writing.
- lack of strategies to assess creative writing.

1. Lack of strategies to teach creative writing

The writing lessons were mostly product-focused and very little attention was given to the process of writing. Participants focused on secretarial aspects of writing and the completed product at the end of the writing period. For example, Participant TC regarded the following as important aspects in creative writing: *Spelling, grammar and sentence construction*, while Participant TX wanted to focus on creativity: In contrast with the process approach, where the focus of writing instruction is more on what is needed in writing and rewriting texts, and moving through stages such as pre-writing, writing, revising, editing (Flower & Hayes, 1981) is the product approach. The process of improving first attempts does not enjoy any priority and does not receive any attention. TY: *“You know, so the other thing that makes writing very difficult is, we focus more on the language, let's say this week we are teaching about verbs, we focus more on the verbs than creative writing itself...”*

It seemed as if the participants lacked confidence and were uncertain of how to proceed systematically. Participant TC said,

“For reading, we start with the sounds, incorporate the pictures...but for writing, the guidelines are just broad...just creative writing.”

However, despite the participant complaints, a detailed framework is indeed provided which promotes research-based methodologies and strategies such as shared and

guided writing. It seems as if a thorough understanding of the detailed policy documents mentioned earlier under the document study, is lacking. The only part which is not clear is how exactly to award marks, but the teachers still have the freedom to create criterion-referenced rubrics. The documents also lack clarity on what is described as the process to improve writing which focuses only on neat and legible work.

2. Lack of strategies to assess creative writing

Scaffolding in reading and writing is paramount in that it is regarded as an integral part of reading and writing instruction. If we know that all readers and writers require scaffolding at some point, it seems obvious that learners in the junior primary phase would need even more of it. This is what Participant TY shared,

“...if the instruction says, 'write a story', that is the instruction, and this child has no clue, even how to start it, just to build sentences. So, it is very challenging at that point because you find a learner that will write something, then this one will just write for you things that don't make sense and you cannot give them a mark for that, and also it will keep you behind because this child needs a mark, you cannot give a zero mark either.”

Teachers regard poor learner progress as keeping them as teachers behind in covering the syllabus. Participant TY said,

“We were never taught how to teach writing - just a few ideas were given, but now you struggle with learners without vocabulary, so you have to build that first and repeat it during the writing lesson, so you try to reinforce it with a relevant picture...”

As mentioned before, Participant TX commented,

“We don't know how to assess their work, so we just try...spelling, punctuation” while Participant TX focused elsewhere when marking, *“I'd rather focus more on the creativity than the correct spelling of words and punctuation marks.”*

Participant TA replied: *“How their ideas follow one another...”*

These comments show how participants viewed official documents as lacking, although those documents are indeed very detailed. For instance, learner marking is identified as a valuable analytical exercise in those documents which have the potential to catapult the development of writing skills to another level.

In this research, an attempt was made to explore how creative writing is taught in Grade 3. The data collected indicated that some challenges were experienced by the participants and consequently improvement possibilities were identified. These included introducing teachers to more instructional strategies based on research and ensuring that the intended curriculum is indeed implemented. In addition to this, a platform was created where teacher skills can be honed and sustained, namely a PLC to collaborate and interact to improve teaching and learning.

The value of creating a PLC was established as well as the need for capacity-building and participants explained that their cluster schools do not meet and are thus inactive. The teachers requested for a workshop, and the support from the school management led to a meaningful afternoon session where SRSD was introduced. It was not perceived as a top-down workshop, but participants felt listened to and acknowledged. Research informs us that top-down, prescriptive professional development workshops are insufficient in providing support to educators' growth and development of effective, transformative instruction. Instead, collaborative inquiry-based interventions provide more opportunities for successful change in teaching/learning (Schnellert, 2020).

After the workshop where SRSD was introduced as a possible strategy to teach creative writing, the participants were eager to try it out and pursue further interventions. Participant TX responded:

“As a young teacher, this was an eye-opener - the knowledge I have gained will help me to guide my learners.”

Another participant, TC, mentioned the need for more workshops such as this related to their current issues. In the last five years, they have not attended any workshops.

Participant TC: *“This is practical and we can use it, not those workshops where we sleep.”*

The introduction to SRSD provided much insight into the teaching of writing.

Participant responses indicated that they found it mostly useful:

After the training, participant TY said,

“Now I know how to assist my learners to write good essays.”

Participant TB was also positive:

“This will help me to help my learners to organise their thoughts.”

While Participant TZ noted,

“I will have to translate it or find a way to use it in Afrikaans...but it sounds fun and is a very good strategy.”

Participant TX said,

“I am going to try out TREE for opinion and also POW + CSPACE and POW + WWW + 2W + 2H for the narrative.”

Participant TA noted:

“I will use it – even to assess my students, it is a great tool, I never had a tool before.”

Participant TZ agreed:

“Yes, I have also learnt more about how to assess learners.”

Figure 5.1 shows screenshots of the SRSD rubrics below. The rubrics are used for assessment after significant teaching has occurred and are also attached as Appendices N and O.

Figure 5.1 Screenshots from SRSD

Tree Scoring Rubric			
Student Name:		Date:	
Essay Title or Prompt:			
TREE Parts	Description	Point Value	Total Points
Topic (Topic introduction)			
	Not present	0	
	Restates the question	1	
	Tells what he or she thinks or believes	1	
	Tells what is coming	1	
Reasons (Note: score only first three reasons)			
Reason #1	Not present	0	
	Provides a reason	1	
	Uses a transition word or phrase	1	
	Explains the reason by giving an example, a detail, or a fact	1	
Reason #2	Not present	0	
	Provides a reason	1	
	Uses a transition word or phrase	1	

WWW + W=2 H=2 (Gr. 3)					
Name:		Date:			
Essay Topic:		Point Value	Self	Peer	Adult
Appropriate to Task					
	Strong connections to the text (2 or more)	1			
Who? (Narrator and/or Characters)					
	Character(s) actions, thoughts and feelings shown (2 per point)	2			
	Skillful dialogue use develops events or shows responses (3 or more)	1			
When? (Situation: Time)					
	Provides detailed time (dark evening, sunny morning)	1			
Where? (Situation: Location)					
	Provides detailed location (Large, grey house, grassy backyard)	1			
What does the character(s) do or want to do? (kick off)					
	Character(s) responds to situations with implied or stated goal Kick-off is present, works well and is interesting, creative, unusual	1			

Source: <https://srsdonline.org/about-srsd/>

The screenshots in Figure 5.1 clearly show that the focus is on what was taught; strong reminders of what should be happening during the writing. It is so transparent; peers and parents can also use it and assist if needed.

The rubric is a powerful tool to assess learning and the learner is actively involved in his/her learning which also ties in with both scaffolding, the MKO and ESD. ESD promotes amongst others the development of creativity, competencies and collaboration more than knowledge. As a key element of the educational understanding of Vygotsky's ZPD, scaffolding is at the heart of such an approach to teaching creative writing. Interrelated to the support provided to enable a student to go beyond their present competence and enhance their existing skills (Shabani, Khatib & Ebadi, 2010), scaffolding is the process of showing or demonstrating and supporting learners until they can do the tasks on their own (Kim et al. 2010). Support comes in many forms such as modelling how to complete a task, guiding them through specific instructions, and motivating and helping the learners to reflect on their challenges such as thinking aloud methods. It is important to note that in the learning/teaching scenario, both the teacher and learner who have mastered the task can provide scaffolded backing.

Through SRSD, teachers assist learners in developing these four basic self-regulation strategies: goal-setting, self-monitoring, self-talk and self-reinforcement for instance when the learner has the ending left to do they can use self-statements like: "I've finished T-R-E and now I only have the final E to go". This mnemonic TREE was explained in Chapter 3 as one that can be used in opinion writing.

t = Topic sentence—tells the reader what you believe.

Your topic sentence is like the tree trunk - it is grounded while other parts of the tree are branching out of it. Your topic sentence should catch the reader's attention and tell the reader what you believe in!

r = Reasons - 3 or more - tell the reader why you said what you said in the topic sentence. The tree will be as strong as its branches/reasons.

e = Explain - Explain each reason, giving leaves to your branches.

e = Ending - Wrap it up right! End your writing well.

The essential components of good writing are taught and can be assessed after learners have ample time to practise. New, diverse strategies rooted in research (evidence-based) can impact teaching and learning. As the learner adopts the instruction and can complete the tasks without assistance, the support is steadily

withdrawn (Kim et al. 2010). Furthermore, Colwell et al. (2015) assert that in order to teach effectively, teachers and educators should incorporate more than just the content of the curriculum.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE FOCUSED INTERVIEWS

The focused interviews revealed that the Grade 3 teachers in both schools experience creative writing instruction as challenging. These findings are further corroborated by the document study and the lesson observations which showed that some of the research participants are not confident and motivated to teach creative writing. It has also been found that the participants consider poor progress, a lack of basic skills, a lack of resources and too little time as factors contributing to ineffective creative writing lessons. Participants also expressed a need for training and were unsure how to assess and mark writing activities. In addition to this, participants seem to prioritise punctuation, spelling and vocabulary followed by sentence construction. The process of writing is not a priority or consideration; instead, the approach in both schools was mainly product-oriented.

5.4 FINDINGS FROM THE DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The document study can be categorised as public documents and personal documents (Fouché et al., 2021:733-734) mentioned in Chapter 4. In the next section, public documents such as the national policy guide for junior primary, the integrated planning manual for Grade 3, the Grade 3 assessment record book and the Grade 3 first language syllabus will be presented. The document analysis was done in two phases: the public documents informing the scope of creative writing instruction in Grade 3, and the personal document analysis which was done after the -lesson observations with the teacher's guidance at best-suited times.

5.4.1 Public Documents

The public document study was conducted to understand exactly how creative writing was described and what guidance, requirements, and recommendations were provided for the teaching of creative writing in Grade 3. It is important to mention that these documents are informative and provide the framework in which teachers operate when teaching creative writing instruction. After reviewing each document a few times,

notes on the elements which seemed most appropriate to the research questions were recorded to address the following:

- Correlation between learner activities and learning outcomes as set out in the syllabus.
- The strengths of the status quo.
- Possibilities for change or reinforcement to enhance optimal learning.
- Skills needed to develop creative writing skills.
- Guidance on the marking and assessment of writing.
- Correlation between national policy documents and syllabus assessment and the Self-Regulation Strategy Development (SRSD).

A reflexive thematic analysis was applied as a method of analysing the data as a series of actions that follow a set order (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:193-198; Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2020):

- Prepare the data for analysis by ensuring all the policy documents are readily available.
- Read through the policy documents, keeping in mind the analysis guide.
- Coding (highlighting sections and labelling each one with a category term, typing the summary and uploading it on the QDA Miner Lite software)
- Describe and assign themes (use codes and describe the findings in the curriculum documents and assign themes to them).
- Report (Representative of descriptions and themes, a qualitative research report is provided)

5.4.1.1 Official documents from the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED)

In Table 5.4 a comprehensive overview of what creative writing in Grade 3 encompasses is provided

Table 5.4 Policy documents containing creative writing information for teachers

Name of official document	Authors	Guidance/Information pertaining to creative writing
National Policy Guide for Junior Primary	National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), a directorate within the Ministry of Education, (MoE).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic approach to teaching • Learner-centred approach • Checklist to evaluate your teaching • Assessment -Types of assessment, and their recording • Principles of assessment • Examples of assessment approaches • Levels of questioning • Monitoring and marking of written work • Aims of marking • Guidelines to marking • Practical considerations when marking
The integrated planning manual for Grade 3	National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), a directorate within the Ministry of Education (MoE).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantages of integration • Learning support • Resources such as stories, songs, and games • Methodologies, e.g., shared writing, modelled writing, guided writing, diary • Progression of phonics, sight words
First language syllabus	National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), a directorate within the Ministry of Education (MoE).	<p>Learning objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce neat and legible final pieces of work using the writing process for example • Use pre-writing strategies to gather information on a topic, e.g., share ideas with fellow learners and organise ideas and information before writing.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft a piece of writing, selecting a text form to suit the purpose, e.g., diary entry, letter, recipe. • Replace, add and/or re-order words and/or sentences • Re-order sequence of ideas or facts • Recognise and correct most punctuation, grammar and spelling mistakes using use dictionaries and other resources • Discuss your own and others' writing to get or give feedback
Grade 3 assessment record book	National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), a directorate within the Ministry of Education, (MoE).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal Observation Checklist consisting of the components and competencies of the subject is done while learners are participating in the lesson's activities and writing assignments. The instructional plan must include informal ongoing evaluation, and distinct assessment criteria must be established. It is recorded after some lessons have already been presented and an understanding has been attained. • Formal continuous assessment marks will first be written down on a class list and then be abridged on formal forms - only after three weeks of teaching and afterwards.

Table 5.4 provides a summary of identified documents that were purposively selected for this study. The summary highlights the names of the documents selected for analysis, authorship and their specific reference to creative writing. The next section provides a short discussion of the data collected from the official documents from NIED.

5.4.1.2 Discussion of public documents

*Methods to teach creative writing in Grade 3- Curricular guidelines
National policy guide*

According to the national policy guide, learners should after the junior primary phase, which is at the end of Grade 3, be able to:

- express themselves well orally,
- read appropriate texts and write reasonably correctly for everyday purposes in their mother tongue (or when instruction in their mother tongue is not possible, in their home language or predominant local language).
- aims for marking

In order to support teachers in achieving this outcome, the document provides an elaborate layout of the aims for marking, which include showing respect for the learner's effort, giving purposeful praise and guidance, demonstrating the standard of work expected from the learners, and evaluating the learner's learning style, strengths and weaknesses to give a basis for planning subsequent teaching. Apart from this, practical considerations are stipulated, such as:

- Where possible, comments should be positive, respectful, personalised and varied.
- Marking work with the learner in class should be valued as the opportunity it gives about timeous learning support teaching and discourages learners from repeating the same errors.
- Initialling and dating work is recommended.
- Learner marking is a valuable analytical exercise for learners when used appropriately.
- The integrated planning manual for Grade 3 (2014:109-110) provides the following framework to encourage effective writing instruction:

Teachers should engage learners to “assist” them in writing on the chalkboard/poster and use the sentences as teaching points, for example, by pointing out syntax errors or grammar mistakes.

- By Grade 3, learners should be able to write sentences on their own (perhaps using some keywords on the chalkboard) and perhaps even keep their own diary. This method is also very useful when revising content and when teaching new concepts such as ‘how to write a procedure’, ‘how to write a description’ or ‘how to write a report’.
- Modelled, guided, shared and independent writing strategies are specifically mentioned as alternative strategies to incorporate into teaching.
- It explained that the strategy of progressing from modelled, to guided, to shared, to independent writing, is based on the idea of developing from structured to unstructured instruction.

Table 5.5 Overview of document study

Integrated Planning Manual Grade 3	Self-Regulation Strategy Development (SRSD)	National Policy Guide for Junior Primary
Modelled Writing	Stages 1 to 6 inclusive of developing background knowledge on genre, pre-skills, vocabulary and a summary of the strategy until self-regulation is embraced,	Communicate competently and confidently
Shared Writing	Using graphic organisers Collaborative planning and writing	Be able to work with and write well on a wide variety of texts.
Guided Writing	Collaborative writing	Able to elicit, describe, explain, discuss and convince in a range of different cultural, linguistic, and social contexts.
Independent Writing	Self-regulation	

Source: Self compilation

Table 5.5 shows that most aspects highlighted in the integrated planning manual and the national curriculum for basic education are also embedded in Self-Regulated

Strategy Development (SRSD). This implies that the notion that teachers are being hesitant to take alternative routes because of their commitment to comply with the curriculum, has no further bearing. In addition, it also implies that SRSD is a compatible strategy for the Namibian context. The fact that it is an effective strategy, backed up by more than 30 years of research, is a bonus.

The assessment book highlights that both informal and formal assessments are done only after teaching has occurred and understanding has been developed. In line with the syllabus every component and competency should be accounted for, for instance:

Handwriting	Rhythm and speed, correct formation, size, spacing
Forms of Writing	Dictation, creative stories, personal experience, procedures, interview questions, cards and invitations
Process to Improve Writing	Produce neat and legible written work planning manual

The injustice done to the description and scope given to the process of writing which was regarded as the crux of writing instruction was noticed. It is watered down to the mere production of neat and legible written work. Despite high-volume research on writing as a complex, multifaceted process (Mackenzie et al., 2015; Hall, 2019; Ozdowska et al., 2021), this curriculum writing is simply not receiving the attention it deserves. This superficial description does not guide teachers sufficiently to teach and assess creative writing scientifically. This gap is addressed further in Chapter 6 which concludes this research.

5.4.2 Personal documents

As mentioned earlier, both public and personal documents were analysed to collect data on the research topic: creative writing. In addition to scrutinising the policy documents, the learners' creative writing activities were also inspected to gain a better understanding of how creative writing was taught in Grade 3.

5.4.2.1 Learner scripts

Looking at the learners' scripts provided insight into their level of writing abilities, the types of activities they did and how they tied in with the syllabus, as well as how marking and assessment were done. Furthermore, it also sheds light on the mistakes often made and how regularly corrections were made.

Creative writing books revealed that they were used for various activities such as drawing, cutting and pasting, circling the correct answer, colouring pictures, labelling pictures, cloze activities, matching and writing suitable words and sentences.

The following general spelling mistakes and grammatical errors were found and some can be seen in Figure 5.2.

- not capitalising properly
- repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of each sentence
- run-on sentences and/or fragmented sentences
- not writing complete sentences with at least a subject (noun) and a predicate (verb)
- not using full stops
- misspelling such as *sweeming* for swimming
- confusion between they/there/their
- *tride* for tried
- not using paragraphs, but mostly writing separate sentences
- not using commas before FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)

Figure 5.2

Examples of learner scripts

My friend

- 1 My name is Hilma.
- 2 My best friend is Saimi she is a kind girl if you don't have food she will give you some food.
- 3 Every day we play games together.
- 4 And Saimi said she likes pizza, broom meat.
- 5 She likes swimming.
- 6 She never tried to bully me.
- 7 And we have the same home name Melly.
- 8 And she is born in November.
- 9 I'm born in April.
- 10 We are best friends.

Tuesday 8 November 2022

The day I was caught in the snow.

- 1 I was caught in snow.
- 2 My mom was caught in snow.
- 3 I found that fun it so happy.
- 4 We play in snow.
- 5 I was in snow.
- 6 I went to the snow.
- 7 I was at the snow.
- 8 I was
- 9
- 10

Tuesday 8 November 2022

The day I was caught in the snow.

I was at farm when it was snowing. I was with my mother and my brother. I was feeling happy! It was very cold. We were building snowmans. We played in the snow. I felt happy because it was my first time to see snow. I was wearing hot clothes. There was a lot of snow. I

In Figure 5.2 the repetition of the same word at the beginning of sentences (I) can be seen and it can be surmised that this is a repeated error by the learner. It is noteworthy to point out that indicating errors is not enough to guide learners effectively. The last picture on the bottom also shows the wrong format and an incomplete activity, instead of paragraphs, sentences are written, and the learner is clearly stuck. The learner's exasperation with having to write ten sentences is almost tangible; he/she is just not

reaching the objective. This type of experience leads to strengthening the reluctance to engage in writing activities.

5.4.2.2 Discussion of personal documents

Marking

Teachers found it challenging to keep ahead of all the marking; sometimes the marking comprised mostly ticks, crosses and the correct spelling of words. However, it was noticed by the researcher that learners were not doing any corrections themselves, and therefore, they were not going back to their completed words. Surely, this is an area where changes could be made to ensure that learners learn from their mistakes.

There is very little to no feedback given, whereas it is a hands-on strategy for double-checking learning and offers reminders to learners. It helps to confirm, refine or clarify their misunderstandings (Oaks et al. 2018).

Types of activities

A variety of written activities are done by the learners that are in line with what the syllabus prescribes, and this provides much practice time. However, it appeared that very little is done collaboratively or cooperatively. Every activity was done individually and there was no evidence of any reworking or editing of an existing draft. Rather than having learners work individually, they can work in cooperative groups where they can share ideas, draw mind maps, and spider diagrams and organise their thoughts. In this way, they can become more actively involved in their own learning. Metacognition plays a vital role in revising and editing written work (Bester et al. 2019). Despite all the guidance in the official documents, most written activities stood isolated and once it was submitted for marking, the learner's part was regarded as completed.

Bester et al. (2019) propose a self-editing checklist that can be adapted as the teaching advances. Such a tool has the potential to draw the learner's attention instead to specific details he/she might have omitted.

5.5 SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT STUDY

The findings from the document study revealed that the documents provided sufficient guidance to teach creative writing effectively. However, it became evident that the guideline for marking is not considered and these findings are further corroborated by the lesson observations and focused interview findings which showed that some of the

research participants are regarding creative writing instruction as a field where little guidance and training has been provided. This led to some participants' lack of motivation when teaching writing. As mentioned in Chapter 3, young writers need explicit scaffolding to develop syntactic and thematic coherence in their writing (Del Longo & Cisotto, 2014).

5.6 FINDINGS FROM THE CREATIVE WRITING LESSON OBSERVATIONS

As part of the data collection, twenty creative writing lessons were observed at the two selected schools, namely, School 1 by Teachers, X, Y and Z and School 2 by Teachers A, B and C.

It was observed that creative writing lessons were mostly done at the end of the week after break, but some teachers moved it to Wednesdays when the Friday was disrupted by events such as Casual Days, Zonal Athletics and Independence Day celebrations. It is mostly taught toward the end of the week (mostly Fridays) as the other language skills (spelling and grammar, vocabulary and theme words, reading and reading comprehension, speaking and listening and handwriting) should be taught earlier in the week. The reason why this happens is to ideally have learners use the vocabulary and theme words in their writing activities.

5.6.1 Lessons

The following observations were made:

Lesson delivery and learner participation

Teachers mostly used flashcards to introduce new words and provided pictures to enhance understanding. Learners participated actively in the introductory part of the lesson in class discussions and were eager to respond verbally. However, as soon as they had to engage in the writing activity, they seemed reluctant. Before learners receive their activity sheets or books, teachers revise the punctuation and grammar rules referred to the wall displays as well. However, learners were regularly asking teachers for assistance with the spelling of words. Teachers left the colourful pictures and flashcards on the board, and displayed them to learners so that they could complete the writing activity. The use of dictionaries was not observed at all; no

encouragement or reference was made to use one. Learners worked on their writing tasks as individuals and no collaboration was encouraged or facilitated during the writing process. Learners seemed to be overwhelmed and kept on asking for words, where to write, against the margin, and focus on letter formation more than on putting their ideas on paper.

Types of activities done by learners

The learners focused more on the secretarial part of writing than on the generative part. There was no mind map or brainstorming activities on an individual level, it seemed as if the classroom discussion was regarded as the generation of ideas. Lesson observations also have revealed that some writing activities were extracted from the textbook as shown in the example below and the emphasis on thematic integration sometimes occurs at the cost of explicit writing instruction. The pitfall in textbook activities lies therein that the actual, explicit teaching is often neglected as teachers tend to focus more on the instructions of the activity and the product or outcome instead of the process. Teachers in the JP phase followed an integrated, thematic approach so all lessons were arranged around the Environmental Studies theme, for example, a topic may be about plants or animals which could become repetitive and boring. It does not leave much room for creativity if one has to describe the plant which one have learnt about in the last two weeks. It could be a different situation if tasked to find out about a plant with healing properties and you have to write an opinion piece about it.

Strategies used to teach creative writing

An overuse of flashcards and picture cards was observed and this seemingly became the modus operandi for teaching writing and other strategies took a backseat. This can be seen in the similarities of the chalkboard displays of the different teachers from the two schools. Shared writing was featured only in one out of the twenty observed lessons. When asked about this, teachers responded that their time was just not enough and this strategy took up a lot of time and planning. There was a lack of scaffolding techniques for example doing corrections, giving constructive feedback and checking if learners apply already acquired skills. Teachers monitor learner progress while they are doing the activity with the focus on completing the activity as instructed. They offer support to learners to spell correctly but are more inclined to

provide answers instead of empowering learners by reminding them which spelling rule would be applicable or using dictionaries. There was little to no demonstration of ways on planning, ordering thoughts/ideas, rewriting, checking or editing. Every lesson seems to be a new experience and there is no progression or building on previously mastered skills. The next section provides a discussion of the board displays referred to in the above list of observations regarding the creative writing lessons.

5.6.2 Board display

Strategies used to teach creative writing

It is worth mentioning that the similarities of the board display among different teachers from different schools just cannot be ignored. It is indicative of a lack of various strategies as well as implying that teachers tend to stick to techniques they are used to. The board display included a list of words (vocabulary of the day) with theme-related pictures, such as different trees, animals or the water cycle. The labelled pictures provide the vocabulary to be used in the writing activity. During the creative writing activity, the pictures and flashcards used during the lesson presentation were left on the board while learners started their writing. Teachers

Clearly, this action was taken to support learners by providing the vocabulary needed to complete the task at hand. Learners' lack of vocabulary is a big concern because it affects their efforts in creative writing assignments. This is also emphasised by Kim and Park (2019), as mentioned earlier.

Furthermore, there was only one shared writing lesson observed and it was evident that both teacher and learners enjoyed the lesson. Also, it provided learners with a colourful display of a graphic organiser and effective reminders of good writing as seen in Figure 5.3 below:

Figure 5.3

Shared writing lesson board display

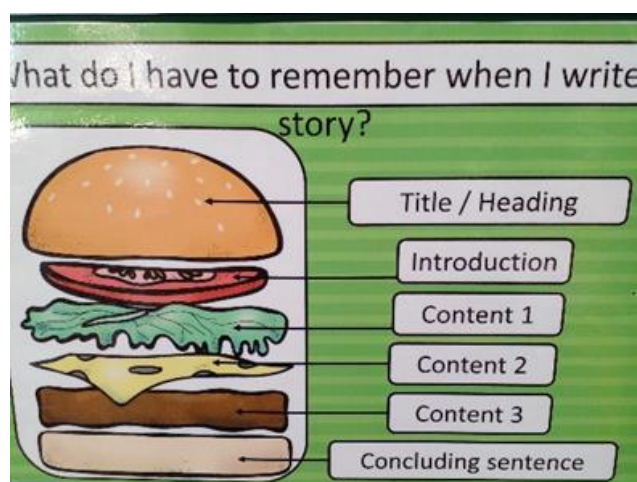


Figure 5.3 shows a chalkboard display of the only shared writing lesson that was observed. This was also the only lesson where the teacher referred to what was done during the previous writing lesson. Learners eagerly participated in the lesson. The attractive and colourful reminders of what good writing entails can become part of the word wall later on which in turn provide learners with print-rich classrooms that enhance their language development.

5.7 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS FROM THE CREATIVE LESSON OBSERVATIONS

Learners eagerly took part in oral discussions, but when they had to write, they seemed overwhelmed; they sighed and moaned and were mostly not very eager to write.

Learners were taking extra care to form the letters correctly and remembering the capital letter letters and correct punctuation. It is noteworthy to mention that learners were constantly asking the teacher for spellings of words that were not on the board.

The focus was more on the secretarial aspect of writing than the authorial aspect of the writing process. Teachers marked by initialling the work and sometimes indicating spelling and punctuation errors, but no corrections were made in the creative writing work observed. At times, learners gave up and submitted incomplete work. It seems as if the creative writing lessons were each treated as an independent lesson, not building on any existing or previously acquired skill and the lack of progression is visible.

5.8 SUMMARY OF LESSON OBSERVATIONS

Creative writing is mostly taught toward the end of the week (mostly Fridays) as the other language skills (spelling and grammar, vocabulary and theme words, reading and reading comprehension, speaking and listening and handwriting) should be taught earlier in the week. The reason why this happens is to ideally have learners use the vocabulary and theme words in their writing.

The problem with constantly providing vocabulary before actual writing is the lack of growth or progression. Proper scaffolding of the process of writing lacks more secretarial than authorial inclined.

Evidence-based teaching is not a priority; teachers are convinced that they do not have the time to learn a new method, never mind implementing it.

Teachers mostly regard their students as behind with foundational skills and are thus not motivated to write.

Teachers lack knowledge of evidence-based instructional strategies, and it has an impact on their self-efficacy.

5.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented data and discussed the themes that were developed in accordance with the three data-gathering tools used in this study, namely, a document analysis, three focused interviews, and twenty lesson observations. The document analysis framed the specific context in which creative writing is taught in Grade 3.

The results and conclusions from the analysed data were provided and discussed. In the data display, the literature review, and the sociocultural theoretical framework discussed in chapters two and three, were interwoven on how creating a PLC can foster sustainable teaching.

The layout of the data obtained from the document study and the observations were supported by the views and experiences of the participants. Therefore, the discussion that followed was based on the comments of the participants' perceptions of teaching writing.

Chapter 6 sets out the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

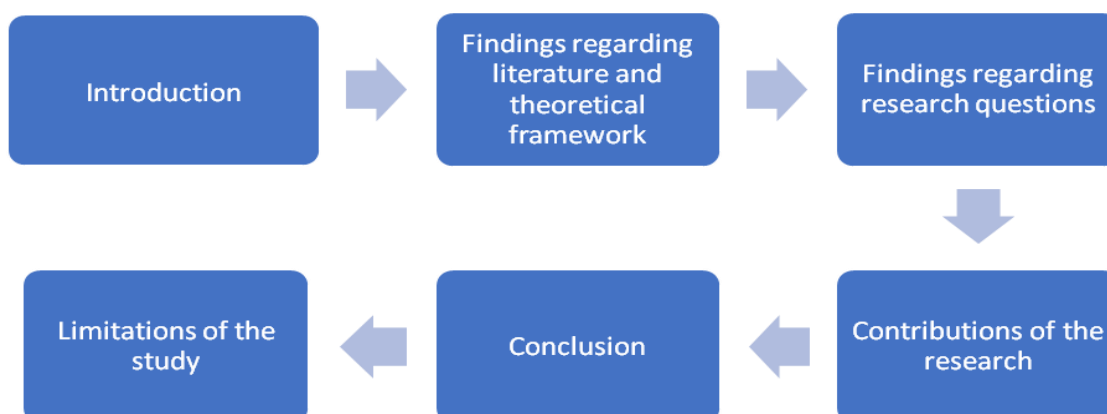
6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, the findings of the study were discussed as well as the themes that were developed in accordance with the three data-gathering tools used in this study, namely, a document analysis, three focused interviews, and twenty lesson observations. The results and conclusions from the analysed data were provided and discussed. In the data display, the literature review, and the sociocultural theoretical framework as well as the social cognitive theory which were discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, were interwoven to illuminate how learning occurs. This, in turn, influences how the challenges in creative writing instruction can be addressed.

The purpose of this chapter is to present a summary of the key findings with regard to the effectiveness of strategies teachers use to teach creative writing in Grade 3. It also outlines the significance of the study, and the limitations of the study, and concludes from the evidence gathered during the literature review, the interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. Recommendations that have educational implications are made for improving the teaching of creative writing in Grade 3. The chapter discusses the significance of the findings in terms of the theoretical framework, the literature review and the research questions. The figure below provides an overview of Chapter 6.

Figure 6.1

An overview of Chapter 6



In summary, the main research question was:

How effective are teaching strategies that are applied by teachers in teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3?

Sub-questions

In an attempt to address the main research question, the following sub-questions emerged:

1. What are teachers' perspectives on teaching creative writing in Grade 3?
2. What evidence-based strategies are used to teach creative writing in Grade 3?
3. What are teachers' perspectives on employing Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) in the teaching of creative writing skills in Grade 3?
4. How can creating a PLC within the school serve as an intervention/recommendation to improve current ways of teaching writing in Grade 3?

The primary aim was to explore how creative writing is taught in Grade 3 and what perspectives teachers held regarding the instruction of creative writing. The data were collected from two primary schools through a document study, creative writing lesson observations and three focus interviews.

The findings of the study are aligned with the literature review and the theoretical framework. A major feature of this chapter is the suggestions made to improve the teaching of creative writing in Grade 3.

This section provides a summary of the previous 5 chapters.

Chapter 1: Background of the study, the problem and methodology.

This chapter contains the background and motivation, the problem statement, the aims, the paradigm perspective, the research design, and the method. Furthermore, the assumptions on which the study is grounded, and the paradigmatic perspectives are discussed as well as the limitations. It concludes with a chapter layout of the research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides a theoretical background to the research. Different studies were reviewed to establish important links between existing knowledge and the research problem being investigated, namely, how creative writing is taught in Grade 3. The constructs are examined in terms of definitions and results from previous studies to find out more about what is needed to improve creative writing.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This chapter explores literature on how creative writing is taught in primary schools, how the teachers support learners to develop this skill as well as how Self-Regulated Strategy Development instruction can impact writing instruction. Literature was scrutinised to explore research-based approaches to improve the writing skills of learners in the junior primary phase and strategies to teach writing effectively in the early grades were explored. Previous research was used to find out how to create a PLC in schools to teach writing effectively.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter discussed the research design and methods that were utilised in the process of collecting and analysing data for the study. The nature of the research problem and research questions seek to implement strategies to teach writing and reflect on it.

Chapter 5: Presentation of the Findings

The main focus of this chapter was to discuss the results of data generated through document analysis, observations and the responses of the interviewees to determine whether or not the main research question has been answered. It also presented the context of the participants, analysis, and interpretation of the study.

Themes were developed based on the questions in Chapter 1. Data were organised and coded. The following themes emerged from the collected data: teacher perceptions and beliefs, challenges when teaching creative writing and a lack of diverse strategies.

6.2 DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

This section provides a discussion of research findings. The first section highlights findings from the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework as presented in chapters one, two, three and four. This is followed by the discussion of findings regarding the research questions.

6.2.1 Findings regarding literature and theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this research comprises the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky and Bandura's social cognitive theory. As elucidated in Chapter 3, Bandura's social cognitive framework is foundational to situated learning, positing that written language lacks inherent meaning and instead directs readers to derive significance from their pre-existing knowledge.

Consequently, both these language learning theorists converge in their concern for the utilisation of prior knowledge to construct meaning from textual content, as well as in recognising the interplay between context, cultural background, and meaning extraction from written text.

The more knowledgeable other (MKO) in this case is regarded as the teacher and/or fellow learners or writing group members who have already mastered the skill. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) helps to make sense of the learner's current skill level and the possible level of proficiency that can be realised (Vygotsky, 1978; Sawyer & Stetsenko, 2014; Eun, 2019; Irshad et al. 2021).

This further motivates the move toward cooperative learning and collaborative teaching to enhance the level of writing skills mastered. Cooperative learning is a teaching strategy that enhances the social learning abilities of learners and involves working together in small groups (Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020). Teachers can scaffold instruction efficiently and avail time for writing group collaborations to maximise learning. Mindful and purposefully crafted scaffolding which includes cooperative learning opportunities enables students to be actively part of their learning. Improved instructional strategies are linked to enhanced student engagement (Donaldson & Papay, 2015). Students learn in different ways and become more interested in what they are studying when they express what they have learnt (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). It thus remains crucial to keep in mind that learners'

capacity to advance depends on both their cognitive skills and the social relationships that teachers create. Such group interaction triggers schema which triggers cognition (Ortlieb, Cheek Jr. & Verlaan, 2016). This ties in with the goals of ESD which in turn highlights the importance of crucial competencies such as creativity, learner-centeredness, problem solving and self-regulation. Researchers also emphasise topic knowledge, teaching and assessment practices, as well as teacher professional development (Schudel et al. 2021:19) as essential for ESD to truly impact quality education.

In light of the above, training in self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) as a way to teach writing and creating a PLC might be ways to mitigate the challenges perceived in teaching creative writing.

6.2.2.1 Main research question: How effective are teaching strategies that are applied by teachers in teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3?

Teachers mostly used one common strategy and there is no strategy in place to improve writing.

The strategies observed include the use of flashcards and pictures of the creative writing topic as mentioned in Chapter 5 (5.5.1.1). The learners mostly worked independently, and no cooperative learning activities were observed. Other approaches include the integrated, thematic approach where Environmental Studies themes and other global issues were integrated into lesson planning. For example, the teacher used the information about trees in Namibia which was covered during the Environmental Studies lesson as a writing prompt (5.7.2) as shown in the board displays. Another teacher used shared writing in the lesson and engaged learners actively while one focused on how to write instructions. In most cases, colourful pictures with flashcards or labels were used to benefit learners who struggled with spelling and to help them kick-start their writing.

These strategies did not seem to be very effective as there was no notable difference or improvement in the quality of learner scripts observed from the beginning of the year to November. This observation was confirmed by the frustration voiced by teachers because of the lack of basic skills and the lack of improvement in writing skills (5.5.3.1). As mentioned earlier, basic skills comprise basic grammar, vocabulary and

punctuation (Kim & Park, 2019; Barton et al., 2023) and combined with advanced skills or higher-order skills in cooperative learning environments writing instruction may improve.

A contextual, thematic and integrated approach to the junior primary is emphasised in the national policy guide and this sometimes leads to a forced thematic approach as teachers feel compelled to use the Environmental theme as central to all language lessons. Instead, the language learning outcomes should be the compelling factor in lesson planning. The implication is a misunderstanding of curricular documents which is further reiterated in teachers' perception that they have very little guidance on the assessment of creative writing. However, a learner-centred approach is endorsed by the Ministry of Education and possible methodologies are suggested like shared writing and guided writing. Besides, clear marking guidelines are provided in the national policy guides and the assessment process is described in detail. Teachers must have a comprehensive understanding of all relevant curriculum documents and that the intended curriculum aligns with the implemented curriculum.

The national policy guide outlines the aspects of creative writing that should be developed, namely, handwriting, forms of writing and the process to improve writing. This research aims to address the gap in the "process to improve writing" which is not explicitly taught or emphasised in classrooms.

This research revealed this gross oversight in the curriculum which led to the injustice of focusing only on the writing product while there is a requirement to also engage in the process of writing (5.2.1). The process itself refers to the stimuli on decision-making and strategy which are empowered or inhibited through pedagogical practices in the classroom (Barton et al. 2023). This is the reason why suggestions are provided in Figure 6.2 to provide concise guidelines to approach the teaching of writing to ensure meaningful scaffolded instruction. Practice and outputs related to writing are moulded by the interrelationships between personal, structural, and cultural contexts. Learner decision-making and problem-solving in writing follow through the intercession of personal (e.g., beliefs, motivations, interests, experiences), structural (e.g., curriculum, programmes, testing regimes, teaching strategies, resources), and cultural (e.g., norms, expectations, ideologies, values) contexts (Barton et al. 2023). Consequently, teachers are the main roleplayers in facilitating the process (Ryan et

al. 2021; Barton et al. 2023). Teachers are the one factor that can bring about the changes needed to transform the creative writing instructional practice.

6.2.2.2 Sub-question 1: What are teachers' perspectives on teaching writing in the junior primary phase?

Teachers view creative writing as a challenging task for which they are ill-equipped.

This study brought to light that teachers perceive the teaching of creative writing as a challenging task for which they are not well trained as reiterated in Chapter 5 (5.5.3). It is an observation that has implications for both pre- and in-service teacher training programmes. Teachers of writing need to be well-informed about writing and its development as well as writing instruction strategies (Faulkner, Rivalland & Hunter 2010, Graham, 2019). Hodges (2017) emphasises that writing theory is constantly fluctuating from an emphasis on mechanics and form to an emphasis on creativity and sociability. The two key skills required for writing include handwriting (fine motor and perceptual skills) and the conceptual and language skills needed for written composition (Ozdowska et al., 2021). It appears that teachers lack this comprehensive perception of the writing process. In addition to this, teachers expressed concern about the gap between curriculum requirements and the extent of training they have received (5.5.1).

Another difficulty that was highlighted is the curriculum guidance being perceived to be minimal (5.5.1.3). In addition to these concerns, teachers are frustrated because learners barely mastered the basic skills. Basic skills such as punctuation, capitalisation, syntax and grammar are not in place which might be the reason for both teachers' and learners' lack of motivation to engage in the creative writing lesson.

The creative writing lesson seemed to be not a very popular one for both the teacher and learner. Unfortunately, the teacher's demotivation spills over to their learners and research has shown that there is a definite link between teacher beliefs and student achievement (Hall et al. 2021).

Teachers do not see their learners making any progress and find it demotivating that on top of these challenges, learners are just automatically progressing to the next grade. They believe that automatic promotion is the main reason they end up with

learners who are lagging behind. This came to light in the focused interviews as mentioned in Chapter 5. The teachers also expressed a lack of strategies to deal with this dilemma and guidance on where to start to sort this out (5.5.1).

In contrast to how teachers highlighted a lack of guidance, the document study revealed comprehensive guidelines for marking, assessment and feedback. The issue where misinterpretation is highly likely to occur is the lack of explanation of what the process to improve writing entails (5.2.1). On the other hand, where elaborate instruction was given in the national policy guide on assessment, marking and feedback, little implementation thereof was observed. In fact, learner scripts showed a lack of feedback, a lack of regular marking and uncertainty about the assessment process prevailed despite the detailed guidance. It seems as if similar isolated writing activities are done week after week with little attention to the detailed process of writing. An aspect of writing instruction that was indeed implemented well was the different types of activities as shown in Table 5.1 such as giving instructions and making invitation cards. Despite the challenges perceived, teachers remained dutiful and always prepared teaching aids which were kept visible as part of the wall display in the classroom.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, teachers felt that, unlike the guidance they get for teaching reading, such as the progression of phonics, it seemed like a guessing game to tackle writing. Another issue for teachers is the lack of knowledge on how to mark creative writing in a meaningful manner and not just based on their general impression.

6.2.2.3 Sub-question 2: What evidence-based strategies are used in Grade 3 to teach creative writing?

There was a clear lack of evidence-based strategies which influenced the development of creative writing in Grade 3.

This study has revealed one prominent strategy that was applied by all the teachers, namely, the use of flashcards and pictures. It was observed that this strategy has been used throughout the year and learners enjoy the visual stimulation. This is a widely used strategy that has great value in enhancing the vocabulary of learners and is known to help learners to recognise and remember words they are regularly exposed to (Miles & Ehri, 2017). Most participants have also indicated that they use flashcards

with pictures to enhance understanding as the language of instruction is not necessarily the mother tongue of learners. The use of flashcards ensures that learners see the spelling and the repetition of words and expressions used in a previous lesson like Environmental Studies, which helps to cement the correct use of the language. However, although it is beneficial to vocabulary expansion, flashcards have the potential to help develop syntax if used to demonstrate complete sentences (Mathura & Zulu, 2021). For the sake of progression, which is a serious gap in current practice, instead of using only words on flashcards, teachers can consider progressing to sentence strips.

Some teachers mentioned using fun activities to ease off the pressure of having to write as learners are not very confident and have not mastered basic skills like punctuation, syntax and grammar as indicated in Chapter 5.6. Fun activities refer to making invitations or birthday cards. In addition to this, other teachers just let learners write down sentences to describe what they see in the pictures.

However, this indicates a lack of diverse strategies which might be rooted in teachers' insecurity to teach writing confidently. Self-assured teachers who believe in their own teaching capabilities are more likely to employ a variety of instructional strategies that may challenge both their own and their learners' thinking. (Mireles-Rios, Becchio & Roshandel, 2019). Teachers who are confident in their teaching abilities are also more likely to employ techniques that engage learners actively which also aligns with the learner-centred approach. Fatyela, Condy, Meda and Phillips (2021) indicate that activities where social integration, shared opinions and constructing knowledge together in small groups can enhance independent thinking which develops sustainability competencies that are discussed in the next section.

Teacher instructional practices and classroom procedures play substantial roles in children's learning as mentioned in Chapter 3.3.4 (De Boer et al. 2018; Gentrup, et al. 2020; Darling-Hammond et al. 2020). This substantiates why instructional practices should be evaluated and supported continuously while also striving to cultivate the professional growth of teachers. Comprehensive teacher professional development is a crucial component of effective writing instruction (Barton et al. 2023).

6.2.2.4 Sub-question 3: What are teachers' perspectives on employing Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) in the teaching of creative writing skills?

The teachers were excited to learn about a strategy that can build their own confidence as well as the confidence of their learners when it comes to creative writing instruction.

The findings discussed in this section flow out of the focused discussion that followed after the workshop to introduce SRSD. The teachers were feeling empowered to try out some of the new skills and they shared their intentions to implement the new ideas and to learn more about SRSD. The Heads of Departments were also supportive and looked forward to continuing with their planning. Teachers expressed their view on SRSD as a strategy that provided simple ways of teaching some of the complexities of creative writing as indicated in Table 5.4. Besides, they perceived it also to have a lot of potential as a tool for assessment which they did not have before (5.5.4.2). Teachers are looking forward to infusing new energy and strategies into their teaching and even discussed possibilities to translate some of the mnemonics into the mother tongue. SRSD is a comprehensive approach to teaching different genres like opinion, narrative, argumentative and persuasive writing (Harris & Graham, 2016; Graham, 2019). This approach starts with basic skills, is iterative and provides self-help tools, even with assessment. It has been well-researched and found to be effective as mentioned in Chapter 3 (Gillespie et al. 2017; Graham & Alves, 2021; Salas et al. 2021). It aims to develop independent writers whose self-regulated progress is part of a learner-centred approach which speaks to both the Namibian curriculum and ESD.

In conclusion to this view, continuous professional development as mentioned above is a way toward ESD. It is crucial to ensure that teachers are knowledgeable about diverse strategies to teach effectively to ensure quality education, SDG 4.

6.2.2.5 Sub-question 4: How can creating a PLC within the school serve as an intervention/recommendation to improve current ways of teaching writing in the junior primary phase?

Creating a PLC has the potential to serve as an intervention to improve the teaching of creative writing.

This research revealed that teachers did not attend any workshops or training in the last five years and their cluster schools do not meet at all (5.5.4.1). It seems as if this aspect of teacher training is neglected, and schools are currently left to their own

devices. Two major issues in the professional development programmes of the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) were identified, namely, the unsuccessful implementation thereof and that even when planning such programmes teachers were not consulted or acknowledged (Kayumbu, 2020). It leads to poor collaboration between top structures and teachers. This in turn influences the attitudes and perceptions of teachers negatively with regard to wholeheartedly participating in any such interventions should they eventually occur. Other research confirms that top-down professional development workshops are insufficient in providing support to teachers (Calvert, 2016).

After the workshop introducing SRSD, teachers shared ideas, issues, and challenges (5.5.4.1). There was a lively discussion about SRSD, and they undertook to visit the website. Teachers mentioned that instead of just waiting for workshops from the Ministry of Education, they are now inspired to help themselves and partner with institutions of higher learning for workshops and community engagements and learn from each other. Even different mother tongue teachers can collaborate to face challenges together. Through collaborations and a goal-driven PLC, teachers can work towards creative problem-solving. ESD embraces the learner-centred approach, creativity, self-motivation, self-regulation, decision-making and problem-solving skills. ESD needs dedicated and skilled teachers who are driven (Bürgener & Barth, 2018; Brandt et al. 2019).

In Chapter 3 Georgiou et al. (2020) highlight the discrepancy between scientific evidence and classroom practice, experience and the teacher's professional judgment. Unfortunately, for various reasons, the Continuous Professional Development Programme (CPDP) in Namibia has flaws and needs to be assessed as mentioned in Chapter 3 (Kayumbu, 2020). Therefore, a professional learning community (PLC) provides a possible way to mitigate the challenges pertaining to the teaching of creative writing as well as to learn and reflect on classroom practice in general. This has the potential to impact teaching and learning effectively. There is no need for any junior primary teacher to work in isolation.

6.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH

6.3.1 The unique contribution made to the research area

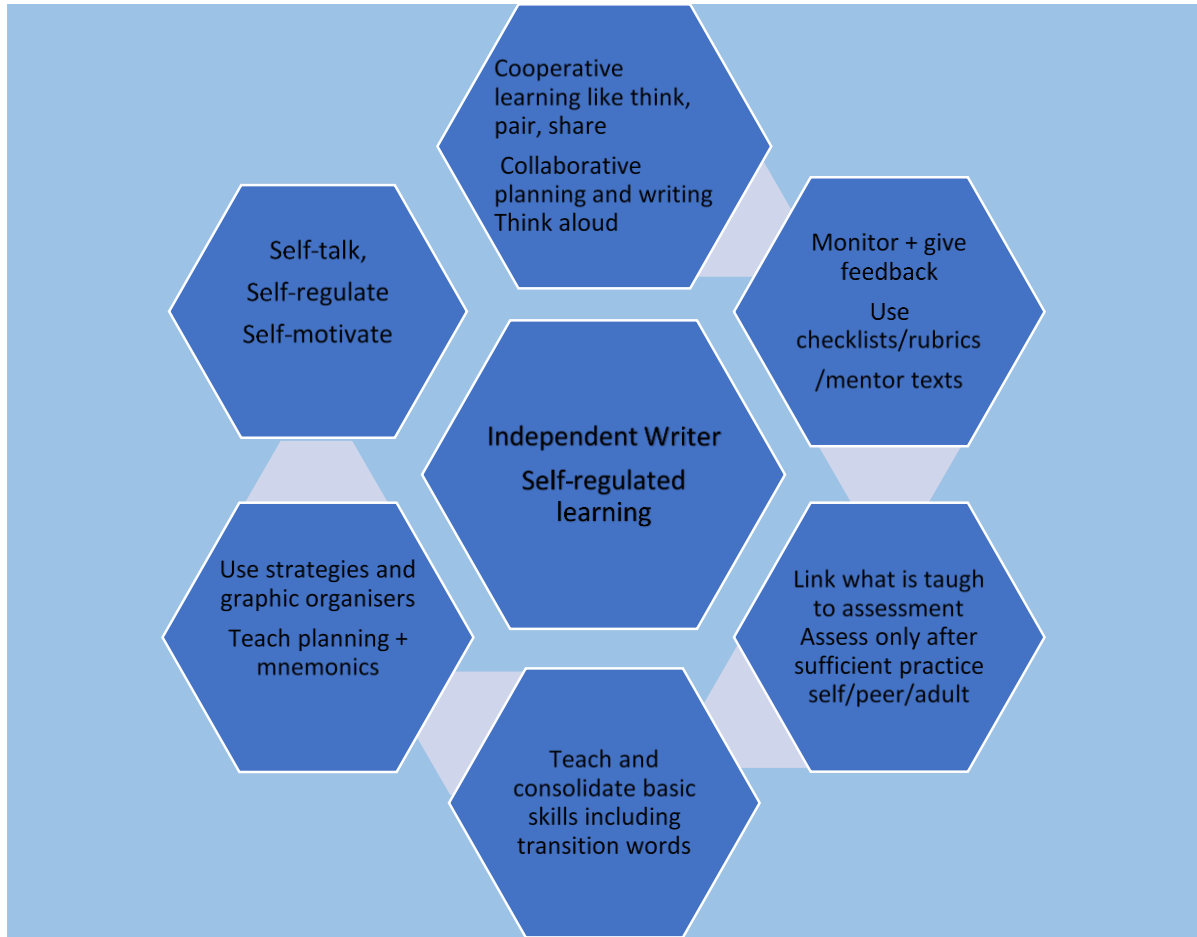
Teachers do not address this component of writing and since there is no follow-up in the assessment record book or any other mention of this in the integrated planning manual and the syllabus, it is neither clarified nor elaborated on. Both the integrated planning manual and the continuous assessment record book clearly outline three aspects of writing:

- Handwriting
- Forms of Writing
- Process to Improve Writing

Although the first two aspects, namely, handwriting and forms of writing are well defined with clear examples, the same cannot be said for the third aspect. The third aspect, the process to improve writing, is not clearly defined or illustrated with any examples in the two documents where reference is made thereof (The integrated manual for Grade 3, (NIED 2015:20-22) and the continuous assessment record book (NIED, 2015:7, 14 and 21). In contrast to high-volume research on the multi-layered nature of writing as a skill, it is documented here as merely “to produce neat and legible written work”. The process of writing includes basic and advanced skills or foundational oral language skills (vocabulary and grammatical knowledge) and higher-order cognitive skills in both authorial and secretarial roles. Simplifying it misleads the teacher into focusing on legible and neat work which only bears implications to the secretarial aspects of writing. The overemphasis on the formation of the letters and where to draw the line, while in the meantime the trail of thought is interrupted the higher order thinking processes not to mention battling with the language of instruction which is not most likely not the learner’s mother tongue. This negligence in the process of writing can no longer be left unattended; a clear path to ensure progression is also needed. After all, the ultimate aim in learning to write (NIED, 2015:109-110) is embodied in independent writers who can successfully plan, write and edit their writing. The suggestions in Figure 6.2 can be used to inform the current approaches to teaching creative writing. It has the potential to strengthen both the writing skill development of learners and the lesson delivery of teachers.

Figure 6.2

Components of the proposed strategy to teach creative writing



In Figure 6.2 an approach to teaching writing is proposed to improve the teaching of creative writing in Grade 3 for both the 1st and 2nd languages. This approach is broadly discussed below under the following four headings:

- Organisation of class and methodologies
- Content
- Assessment
- The teacher as a reflective practitioner

It has the potential to provide the teacher with an approach that can mitigate the challenges currently perceived when teaching creative writing. Moreover, it is

embedded in a continuous instructional scaffolding process while honing writing skills to develop independent writers. The issue of not knowing where to start is addressed as well as the guidance on how to deal with assessment. This strategy also embraces collaborative teaching and learning and self-assessment, peer assessment and adult assessment.

i) Organisation of class/groups/methodologies

Teachers are encouraged to embrace cooperative learning strategies such as thinking, pairing and sharing. Instead of jumping right into individual work, collaborative planning and writing can be explored.

ii) Content

- Be consistent with the teaching of basic skills (punctuation, syntax, grammatical structures) across the curriculum.
- Browse the internet to search for ideas and turn boring grammar lessons into engaging sessions, use catchy phrases and fun activities such as e- goes away when -ing comes to stay. No comma before FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or yet, so) etc.
- Develop background knowledge, pre-skills and vocabulary.
- Teach learners explicitly how to write topic sentences.
- Consolidate through practising the notion of one idea, one paragraph.
- Use mentor texts to aid the teaching/learning process; when the teacher reads the text, learners identify the heading/topic sentence, linking device/transitioning word, conclusion or wrapping up etc.
- Teach learners to plan, and help them with mnemonics for example when engaged in narrative writing; POW (**P**ick my idea, **O**rganise my notes, **W**rite more) and W-W-W, What = 2, How = 2 graphic organiser.
- Think aloud when you model writing and encourage learners to do the same for example “What am I doing...oh yes, I am describing my birthday cake...what colour was it?”
- Embrace self-talk to be a normal part of your classroom practice.

iii) Assessment

- Assess only after teaching and adequate practice (not all writing attempts have to be assessed formally).
- Link what was taught directly to the assessment.
- Do self/peer assessment as well as guardian/parent/tutor assessment (in this way you empower siblings and parents, and we can become a nation that embraces writing).
- Use rubrics and share them with your learners beforehand (for example the screenshots for some SRSD rubrics in 5.2).
- Monitor the progress, give feedback, and assess *for* learning (and for your own teaching to recognise your blind spots and to reflect on your practice).

iv) The teacher as a reflective practitioner

- Reflect on the teaching and learning in the classroom and identify challenges and needs.
- Become part of and participate in goal-oriented PLCs and address challenges within your community.
- Take ownership, invite guests (experts/veteran teachers/lecturers/stakeholders and NGOs), and find creative solutions.
- Embrace the notion of self-motivated, self-talk, and self-regulated.

6.3.2 Contribution to the body of knowledge

This research is significant because it describes perspectives on writing instruction that have the potential to benefit teaching and learning and highlights the importance of research-based methods to teach writing and embrace EBT in general. By participating in the research-based method activities of the introduction to SRSD, teachers experienced the practical application of what was stated by theory. Higher-order thinking and sustainability competencies are developing as soon as learners start to regulate their learning.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

6.4.1 Recommendations for Practice

6.4.1.1 Schools and teachers

It was found that there was no common understanding of learner-centred education and that it constitutes more than question-and-answer sessions. Therefore, it is recommended that a common understanding of essential components of learner-centredness like collaboration and cooperative learning be highlighted so that it is embraced in the classroom.

A lack of evidence-based methodologies and strategies were used in creative writing lessons, despite it being sanctioned in official curriculum documents. Hence, the recommendation to design workshops and practice runs to find research-based methods that can be applied in a contextualised manner, in conjunction with professional judgment to improve teaching and learning.

It was found that the poor administration of national CPD-programmes implies that schools take it upon themselves to improve their teaching/learning. Moreover, teachers desire professional development engagements, hence the recommendation to school management to endorse and support PLC activities which require no national budget approvals.

A lack of diverse strategies to teach creative writing was identified. Therefore, it is recommended to diversify the strategies of teaching creative writing.

It was found that learners seem to struggle to work independently and they do not even use dictionaries but constantly ask for the spelling of words. Therefore, it is recommended to teach self-regulation skills and empower learners to work towards independence.

It was found that little to no support was provided to teachers, therefore, the school management should strive to provide specific feedback during school evaluations, for example, instructional strategies to support teachers.

6.4.1.2 Institutions of higher learning

It was evident that teachers became stuck in a rut and easily fell into the habit of returning to the same methods. Therefore, it might be meaningful to capacitate student teachers to become reflective practitioners and active researchers. Researchers with authentic interventions and strategies for self-regulation can translate them into classroom practice.

It was found that the gap between research and practice is still too big and institutions of higher learning are called to develop research collaborations with teachers, schools and regions. This has the potential to bring reform to the mentoring of students during practicums and reform in classroom practice.

The findings about the poor CPD situation in the country require institutions of higher learning to incorporate sustainable ways to enhance continuous professional development which includes the use of evidence-based methodologies to keep track of global trends.

6.4.1.3 Policymakers

It was found that the components that are supposed to inform creative writing instruction and provide guidance are compacted all over various, different documents, namely, the Integrated Manual, the National Policy Guide for Junior Primary, The Syllabus for First Language and the Syllabus for Second Language. This means that there is no comprehensive view of what is required, endorsed and advised. It is thus recommended that the JP curriculum be revised and an explicit writing curriculum be incorporated to guide all teachers effectively to ensure quality education for all.

It was found that a very big gap existed in the process of writing as set out in the current curriculum. It is recommended that the void which is supposed to speak to the process of writing be explicitly defined as such. Instead of referring to legible and neat work rather focus specifically on secretarial and authorial aspects of writing. It is recommended that these aspects of writing are explicitly outlined to provide clear and concise guidelines to ensure a clear path for writing progression and strengthen simple to complex skill development. It is recommended that clear benchmarks and thresholds of what the curriculum aims to achieve are formulated and then effectively

communicated through interactive training and collaboration with higher institutions of learning.

It was found that evidence-based teaching is lacking in classrooms and education for sustainability which is recommended to align the curriculum with EBT to remain globally relevant. In the same vein, it is critical to provide teachers with the skills they need to establish sustainable learning environments wherever they go in this dynamic world when they are frequently moving between schools, regions, nations, and continents. Also, in being cognisant of SDGs as universal, applying to all countries and all sectors, it is recommended that SDG 4, namely, quality education be infused and supported in all teaching and learning contexts. This includes preparing teachers to teach creative writing effectively.

6.4.2 Recommendations for further research

It was found that teachers lack the knowledge to assess creative writing and it seems that the provided rubric with the grade descriptors is insufficient in providing guidance. It is recommended that more research be done on effective ways of assessing creative writing in the junior primary phase.

It was found that teachers lack EBT and therefore it is recommended that further studies are done to explore how teachers use scientific methods and how creating a PLC can improve teaching and learning.

6.4.3 Limitations

The research approach and procedures followed ensured the validity and reliability of the study. However, there were some limitations. The primary and key limitation of this research was that the sample size was small and it was thus difficult to make generalisations. The research was conducted in two primary schools only, therefore the results of the study might not be fully generalisable. The selection was based on the qualitative research design with focus group interviews, document analysis and creative writing lesson observations where rich data was collected from the participants who were willing to participate in the research. Some participants regarded the interview as a good outlet to vent their frustrations. However, even in the

venting, meaningful data was collected and the meaningful discussions led to participants feeling heard and part of the process.

Therefore, the study established, despite the above limitations, that participants believed to be inadequately trained to teach creative writing effectively and they do not feel confident to teach and assess it. The participants were eager to learn about diverse strategies.

6.5 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The study explored the Grade 3 teachers' perspectives on teaching creative writing in the junior primary phase. This study also sought to explain how implementing Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) can impact the teaching of writing skills in Grade 3 in the two selected primary schools in Windhoek, Namibia and to guide teachers towards creating a PLC (professional learning community) within each school. The study adopted a qualitative approach and was located in an interpretive paradigm. Document analysis, observations and interviews were used to collect data for the study. The empirical findings of the study made a noteworthy contribution to knowledge, policy, JP teaching approaches and the continuous professional development of teachers.

The main findings revealed that explicit training of the teaching of writing skills in the junior primary phase is crucial.

Challenges perceived by teachers, amongst them, is the skill level of learners entering the Grade 3 class with a backlog of poor letter formation, tiring before the activity is completed, and poor attendance which makes follow-up activities difficult to ensure the process of improving writing skills are developed optimally. The research allowed teachers to share their views on the teaching of creative writing in Grade 3. The teachers were able to express the challenges they encountered in teaching creative writing such as a lack of vocabulary. Amongst the pitfalls of an integrated curriculum is the lack of time to plan effective components to obtain the collective.

To date, there is no well-established writing curriculum in the junior primary phase in Namibian schools. The current curriculum does not address the process of writing adequately, and therefore, also provides very little guidance on the matter. The unsuccessful CPD of teachers is an issue that requires urgent attention as we live in a changing world, teachers need to be capacitated to teach responsively. In this

regard, creating goal-driven PLCs with managerial support on both school and regional levels may present a way to mitigate current challenges. A writing curriculum that has the potential to address issues of explicit instruction and effective assessment to catapult writing skills into another category. The main assertion is that teachers need an explicit curriculum and training therein so that the implemented curriculum is aligned with the intended curriculum which is not the case at the moment in writing. The complex nature of our language policy, should not hold us back, employing research-based methods in classrooms may be the beginning of a fruitful journey as a culture of reflective practitioners develops.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2022/07/06

Ref: **2022/07/06/36576158/15/AM**

Dear Mrs JM Jansen

Name: Mrs JM Jansen

Student No.: 36576158

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2022/07/06 to 2027/07/06

Researcher(s): Name: Mrs JM Jansen
E-mail address: 0812402444
Telephone: 36576158@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr. Millicent Ngema
E-mail address: engemam@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 012 429 4472

Title of research:

Exploring the strategies used for teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3: The case of two Namibian schools

Qualification: PhD Early Childhood Development

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 2022/07/06 to 2027/07/06.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2022/07/06 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 **2027/07/06**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2022/07/06/36576158/15/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 Motlhabane
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Appendix B: Permission Letter: Executive Director: Khomas Region



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Enquiries: Mr. G. Munene
Tel: +264 61-293 3202
Fax: +264 61-293 3922
Email: Gibson.Munene@moe.gov.na
File no: 13/2/9/1

Luther Street, Govt. Office Park
Private Bag 13186
Windhoek
Namibia

Ms Jessica Jansen
P. O. Box 2197
Walvis Bay

Dear Ms Jansen,

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN KHOMAS REGION

The Ministry wishes to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 9 September 2022 seeking for permission to conduct academic research in the Khomas region for your PhD studies which is focusing on: *"Exploring the Effective Strategies Used for Teaching Creative Writing Skills in Grade 3: The Case of two Namibian Schools."*

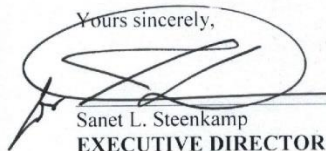
Permission has been granted to you. However, you have to seek for further clearance from the Khomas Regional Director of Education, Arts and Culture to ensure that:

- staff members' normal work is not disrupted during your interviews;
- participation is voluntary; and,
- parental consent should be granted by the parents / guardians of all participants who are 16 years of age.

Furthermore, you are kindly requested to share your research findings with the Ministry after completion of the research project. You may contact Mr G. Munene on the above provided contacts at the Directorate: Programmes and Quality Assurance (PQA) for submission of your research findings at the above indicated details.

We wish you the best in conducting your research and the Ministry looks forward to hearing from you upon completion of your studies.

Yours sincerely,


Sanet L. Steenkamp
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



All official correspondence must be addressed to the Executive Director

Page 1 of 1



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
KHOMAS REGIONAL COUNCIL
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Tel: [09 264 61] 293 4356
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Private Bag 13236
WINDHOEK

12 January 2022

P. O. Box 2197
Walvis Bay
Namibia

For Attention: Ms. Jessica Jansen

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH INTERVIEWS WITH SELECTED
PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN WINDHOEK, KHOMAS REGION**

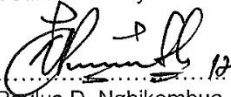
Your letter dated 13 December 2021 on the above topic is hereby acknowledged.

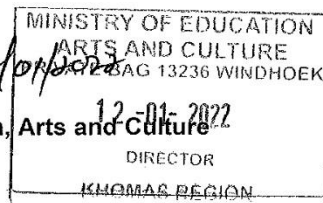
Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct research on "Exploring the effective strategies used for teaching creative writing skills in grade 3: the case of two Namibian school" at Elim Primary School and MH Greef Primary School in Khomas Region under the following conditions:

- ❖ The Principal of the selected school to be visited must be contacted in advance and agreement should be reached between you and the Principal.
- ❖ The school programme should not be interrupted.
- ❖ The teachers and students who will take part in this exercise will do so voluntarily.
- ❖ The Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture should be provided with a copy of your thesis/ findings.

We wish you success in your research.

Yours sincerely


Paulus D. Nghikembua
Director of Education, Arts and Culture



23 August 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: CONFIRMATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

This letter serves to confirm that I have completed the instructional design work for this Ph.D. thesis:

Title: Exploring the Strategies Used for Teaching Creative Writing Skills in Grade 3: A Case of Two Namibian Schools.

Student: Jessica Mary-Ann Jansen

Student No: 36576158

The instructional designer has concentrated on instructional design principles and methodologies to create a learning resource that could effectively convey the findings and insights of the research to a broader audience. The following components were looked at

- **Content Structure:** The thesis's content was organised logically and pedagogically to ensure that complex concepts were broken down into digestible sections.
- **Media Selection:** The graphics were clear and enhanced the learning experience and understanding of the research.

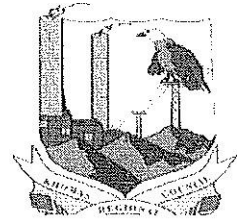
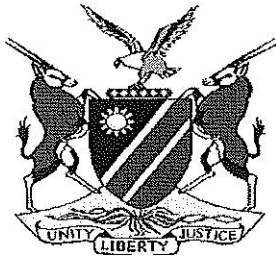
For further inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact the Instructional Designer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joy Hambabi".

Joy Hambabi

Appendix C: Permission Letter: Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

KHOMAS REGIONAL COUNCIL

DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Tel: [09 264 61] 293 4356 Private Bag 13236 Fax: [09 264 61] 231
367/248 251 WINDHOEK

12 January 2022

P. O. Box 2197
Walvis Bay
Namibia

For Attention: Ms. Jessica Jansen

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH INTERVIEWS WITH
SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN WINDHOEK, KHOMAS REGION

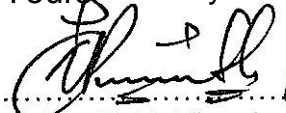
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Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct research on "Exploring the effective strategies used for teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3: the case of two Namibian school" at Elim Primary School and MH Greef Primary School in Khomas Region under the following conditions:

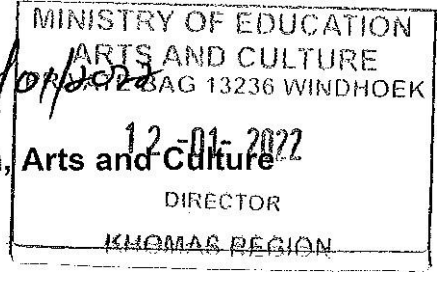
- The Principal of the selected school to be visited must be contacted in advance and agreement should be reached between you and the Principal.
- The school programme should not be interrupted.
- The teachers and students who will take part in this exercise will do so voluntarily.
- The Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture should be provided with a copy of your thesis/ findings.

We wish you success in your research.

Yours sincerely



Paulus D. Nghikembua
Director of Education, Arts and Culture



Appendix D: Permission Letter to Conduct Research

P.O. Box 2197

Walvis Bay

Namibia

Executive Director
Ministry of Education Arts and Culture
Ms Steenkamp

Dear Ms Steenkamp

Request for permission to do research in two primary schools in Windhoek as part of studies pertaining to a PhD in Curriculum and Instructional Strategies

I, Jessica Jansen, am doing research with Dr. Millicent Ngema (Contact number: 012 429 4472 E-mail address: engemam@unisa.ac.za), towards a PhD at the University of South Africa. I hereby, would like to ask permission to conduct the study at, Windhoek, Khomas Region. I selected these schools because they offer English and Afrikaans languages in the JP-phase, in which I am fluent.

The purpose of this study will be to explore the Grade 3 teachers' perspectives on teaching creative writing in the junior primary phase. This study also seeks to explain how implementing Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) can affect the teaching of writing skills in Grade 3 in the two selected primary schools.

The benefits of this study are to provide feedback to the concerned bodies (curriculum designers, textbook publishers, teachers, researchers, and parents) to help them improve the teaching/learning of writing skills in primary schools and to emphasise the importance of using scientifically proven methods in classrooms.

There are no foreseeable risks, and confidentiality is ensured. I commit to request permission from the principals and teachers as required.

Feedback procedure will entail the researcher's communication of the outcomes of the result to all the participants of this study. Please see details pertaining to the research process below.

Title:

Exploring strategies used for teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3: The case of two Namibian schools

Instrumentation and data collection techniques A multi-method approach will be applied to collect data. The main data collection method will be focus interviews to prompt the participants' true experiences and perceptions of teaching writing in the junior primary phase. Classroom observation, field notes and document analysis like learner work samples will be used to collect data.

Observation

Two periods per week will be spent in the Grade 3 classrooms in the two selected schools for the duration of four weeks. Comprehensive notes on the writing instruction lessons will be documented including photographs of teaching material where relevant.

Document analysis

Both public documents and private documents are regarded as qualitative documents (Fouché, Strydom, & Roestenburg, 2021). Therefore, public documents like the syllabi for first and second language teaching and teacher manuals will be analysed to provide data. Personal documents like teacher lesson plans and year plans as well as learner workbooks to determine the level of achieving writing lesson outcomes will be used to collect data.

Focus interviews

This study will mainly utilise focus group interviews to gain more understanding of how teachers perceive teaching writing strategies and the efficacy thereof while being cognisant of the curricular expectations. The researcher will assume the role of moderator. A moderator keeps the small and homogenous group focused on the topic of discussion.

This focus group will be consisting of three Grade 3 teachers of the two selected schools and the researcher. Sessions will be recorded. After the group session, notes will be compiled which will be compared to the recording. This will be concluded with a final focus group interview after a writing workshop.

Transcripts and observation notes will be shared with participants which gives them a chance to check if they were truthfully recorded.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

.....

Jessica Jansen, Researcher

Student number: **36576158**

Cell no.: 0812402444

kamatijessica@yahoo.com or jansenj@unam.na

Appendix E: Letter requesting permission from the Regional Director

P.O.Box 2197
Walvis Bay
Namibia
31 January 2021

The Regional Director
Ministry of Education Arts and Culture
Mr. Nghikembua

Dear Mr Nghikembua

Request for permission to do research in two primary schools in Windhoek as part of studies pertaining to a PhD in Curriculum and Instructional Strategies

I, Jessica Jansen, am doing research with Dr. Millicent Ngema (Contact number: 012 429 4472 E-mail address: engemam@unisa.ac.za), towards a PhD at the University of South Africa. I hereby would like to ask permission to conduct the study at..... Windhoek, Khomas Region. I selected these schools because they offer English and Afrikaans languages in the JP-phase, in which I am fluent.

The purpose of this study will be to explore the Grade 3 teachers' perspectives on teaching creative writing in the junior primary phase. This study also seeks to explain how implementing Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) can affect the teaching of writing skills in Grade 3 in the two selected primary schools and how PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) could be used effectively.

The benefits of this study are to provide feedback to the concerned bodies (curriculum designers, teachers, researchers and parents) to help them improve the teaching/learning of writing skills in primary schools and to emphasise the importance of using scientifically proven methods in classrooms.

There are no foreseeable risks, and confidentiality is ensured.

Please find attached the permission letter from the office of the Executive Director and the Regional Director.

I commit to meeting the teachers beforehand and to establishing a good rapport with your office and amongst the research group.

Below is a brief layout of the data collection method to provide more context.

Title:

Exploring the effective strategies used for teaching creative writing skills in Grade 3: The case of two Namibian schools

Instrumentation and data collection techniques

A multi-method approach will be applied to collect data. The main data collection method will be focus interviews to prompt the participants' true experience and perception of teaching writing in the junior primary phase. Classroom observation, field notes and document analysis like learner work samples will be used to collect data.

Observation

Two periods per week will be spent in the Grade 3 classrooms in the two selected schools for the duration of four weeks. Comprehensive notes on the writing instruction lessons will be documented.

Document analysis

Both public documents and private documents are regarded as qualitative documents (Fouché, Strydom, & Roestenburg, 2021). Therefore, public documents like the syllabi for first and second language teaching and teacher manuals will be analysed to provide data. Private documents like teacher lesson plans as well as learner activities

and workbooks to determine the level of achieving writing lesson outcomes will be used to collect data.

Focus interviews

This study will mainly utilise focus group interviews to gain more understanding of how teachers perceive teaching writing strategies and the efficacy thereof while being cognisant of the curricular expectations. The researcher will assume the role of a moderator. A moderator keeps the small and homogenous group focused on the topic of discussion.

This focus group will consist of three Grade 3 teachers of the two selected schools and the researcher. The sessions will be recorded. After the group session, notes will be compiled which will be compared to the recording. This will be concluded with a final focus group interview after a writing workshop.

Transcripts and observation notes will be shared with participants which gives them a chance to check if they were truthfully recorded.

Avidly awaiting your favourable reply.

Yours sincerely,

.....

Jessica Jansen, Researcher

Student number: **36576158**

Cell nr: 0812402444

kamatijessica@yahoo.com or jansenj@unam.na

Appendix F: Letter requesting permission from the Principals

Khomas Region: Education

Primary School

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

I, Jessica Jansen, am doing research as part of my studies in accordance with the requirements for the degree of PhD in Education at the University of South Africa. I hereby would like to ask permission to conduct the study at your school, in Windhoek, Khomas Region. I selected this school because English/Afrikaans is being offered both as a subject and the language of learning from Grade 0 to Grade 3. I am fluent in those two languages, and it would be challenging if samples of the written work of the learners are in another language. The language policy of Namibia stipulates that the mother tongue instruction is followed during junior primary grades.

This study also seeks to explain how implementing Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) can affect the teaching of writing skills in Grade 3 in the two selected primary schools and how PLC's (Professional Learning Communities) could be used effectively.

The research will entail observation of the writing lessons in Grade 3 and two focus group interviews with the teachers at each school. The researcher will also study the learner books and tests to get a better understanding of how learners applied what they were taught.

The benefits of this research are stipulated as follows:

- It allows participants (in this case, the teachers and the researcher) to collaborate with one other and to reflect meaningfully on why the results were obtained during the implementation of the strategies and what these results mean for their practice.
- It engages participants actively and empowers those who participate in the process.

- It impacts directly to improve practice and brings about change.

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

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

Kindly, find attached the permission letter from the Director of Education.

Yours sincerely

.....

Jessica Jansen, Researcher

Student number: **36576158**

Cell nr: 0812402444

kamatijessica@yahoo.com or jansenj@unam.na

Appendix G: Letter requesting permission from a Teacher

Dear Sir/Madam

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a research project that I, Jessica Jansen, am conducting as part of my studies in accordance with the requirements for the degree of PhD in Education at the University of South Africa.

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

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

I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you should agree to take part. The importance of teaching writing is substantial and well documented. By the age of eight a learner is expected to engage in writing for 50% of their school day. It is only fair that we equip them well.

The purpose of this research is to implement an evidence-based method in the primary school classroom to improve the writing skills of learners and to create a PLC (Professional Learning Community) where we can learn from each other.

The research will entail observation of the writing lessons in a Grade 3, and two focus group interviews with the participants (teachers). The researcher will also study the learner books and writing activities only to get a better understanding of the instructional practices.

The benefits of this research are stipulated as follows:

- It allows participants (in this case, the teachers and the researcher) to collaborate with one other and reflect meaningfully on the results and how these results can impact their classroom practice.
- It impacts directly to improve practice and brings about change.

- It allows an opportunity to become part of a PLC.

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

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve two focus interviews of approximately 40 to 60 minutes in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location at a time convenient to you. In this interview, I would like to have your views and opinions on this topic. This information can be used to improve current methods of writing instruction in Namibia. This will be concluded with a final focus group interview after a writing workshop.

I would also observe the writing lessons for four weeks to see how creative writing is taught and may photograph teaching material where relevant.

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

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

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 0812402444 or by e-mail at jansenj@unam.na

I really look forward to interacting with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation to participate, kindly sign the consent form on the next page.

Yours sincerely

.....

Jessica Jansen, Researcher

Student number: **36576158**

Cell nr: 0812402444

kamatijessica@yahoo.com or jansenj@unam.na

Appendix H: Consent Form

CONSENT

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

Participant's Name **Participant Signature:**.....

(Please print):

Jessica Jansen, Researcher

Student number: 36576158

Cell nr: 0812402444

.....

FOCUS GROUP/INTERVIEW ASSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

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

Participant's Name **Participant Signature:**.....

(Please print):

Jessica Jansen, Researcher

Student number: 36576158

Cell nr: 0812402444

Appendix I: Learner Assent Forms

ASSENT FORM FOR LEARNERS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Writing creatively

RESEARCHER NAME: Jessica Jansen

Researcher's cell no.: 0812402444

What is RESEARCH?

Research is something we do find **NEW KNOWLEDGE** about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about children and the things that affect their lives and their school. We do this to try and make the world a better place!

What is this research project all about?

This project is all about how we learn to write about what we saw, feel, want- how we write stories.

Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?

It is about Grade 3s and you are in the Grade 3 class.

Who is doing the research?

I work at the university of Namibia where I help students to become teachers. So, I hope to help teachers and learners.

What will happen to me in this study?

I will visit your class to sit in on the creative writing lessons and see how you are doing in the writing activities and if there is anything I can do to help, I will talk to your teacher about it. You do not have to do anything; you continue with classes like always. I will sit in the back of the classroom and look at your writing books.

Can anything bad happen to me?

Nothing bad can happen to you, it is just that you have a visitor, only for those writing lessons- 2 periods per week.

Can anything good happen to me?

I do not know if this will help you to become a better writer, but we can certainly learn more about writing.

Will anyone know I am in the study?

No, your name or picture will not be shown to anyone, only your written work which I will look at and write about to my teacher who is called, a supervisor.

Who can I talk to about the study?

You can always talk to your teacher, your classmates or to me, the researcher.

What if I do not want to do this?

You are free to say no, you do not want me to look at your books.

You do not have to do this.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

YES

NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES

NO

Do you understand that you can STOP being in the study at any time?

YES

NO

.....
Your Signature

.....
Printed Name

.....
Date

.....
Name of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s)

.....
Researcher explaining study

Signature

Jessica Jansen

Date

Appendix J: Interview Guide

Interview questions:

Part A

1. What frustrates you most when teaching writing? What do you perceive as challenges to teach writing effectively?
2. How does the curricular pace and the actual pace, where learners find themselves correlate?
3. Do you need any resources to enhance your teaching of writing? What resources can you identify that might enhance your teaching of writing?
4. How do you think a new approach can benefit the teaching/learning process? For example after explaining mnemonics like POW/TREE? (*Show the printed pages.*)
5. How do you feel before teaching writing/ during the lesson and afterwards when you are marking?
6. How do you assess creative writing to monitor students' progress?
7. What skills do you think is needed to learn to write?
8. A very important observation from the Grade 3-syllabus is the learning objective whereby learners are **to follow a process to improve their writing which entails the following:**

produce neat and legible final pieces of work using the writing process, e.g. - use pre-writing strategies to gather information on a topic, e.g. share ideas with class mates and organise ideas and information draft a piece of writing, selecting a text form to suit the purpose, e.g. diary entry, letter, recipe - replace, add and/or re-order words and/or sentences - re-order sequence of ideas or facts to make meaning clear - recognise and correct most punctuation, grammar and spelling mistakes using - use dictionaries and other resources - discuss own and others' writing to get or give feedback.

What are your perspectives on this? Challenges and strengths?

PART B

1. Briefly, describe the professional development support you receive or activities you participate in.
2. When last did you attend a conference, workshop or seminar or webinar? Elaborate please- who paid for it, what about logistics and arrangements (leave, fees, transport, relief teachers)
3. What would you suggest can be done to overcome these issues? Like online training/ webinars etc?

4. What would you say are some of the challenges that you experience in professional development or in wanting to be part/participate in professional development activities?
5. Despite the challenges, what would you say makes it possible for you to participate in the professional development activities?
6. What do you understand by the term Professional Learning Community (PLC?)
PLCs are communities that provide the setting and necessary support for groups of classroom teachers to participate collectively in determining their own developmental paths, and to set up activities that will drive their development- Sirkka, T . (2016)
7. Would you like to be part of a PLC and what role would you like to play?
8. What activities can happen in a PLC?

Focus interview guide

(after the *Introduction to SRSD as a strategy to teach writing workshop*)

1. What would you say are some of the challenges that you experience when it comes to professional development or in wanting to be part/participate in professional development activities?
2. What would you suggest can be done to overcome these issues? Like online training/ webinars etc?
3. Would you like to be part of a Professional Learning Community (PLC)
4. [PLCs are communities that provide the setting and necessary support for groups of classroom teachers to participate collectively to improve teaching and learning] and what role would you like to play?
5. What activities would you like to see happening in a PLC?
6. How did you experience this SRSD workshop? Please elaborate on strengths and areas to improve.
7. Do you think it provided you with a tool to use in your classroom when teaching writing? Kindly motivate your answer.

Thank you very much for your attendance and willingness to participate.

Appendix K: Observation Guide

Observation Guide

Grade 3	Period.....	Day and Time.....
Nr. of learners.....	Language.....	Teacher.....
School.....		
.....		
.....		

1. Description of lesson development:

INTRODUCTION

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LESSON DEVELOPMENT:

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APPLICATION:

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2. Level of learner participation *during lesson*. high / average/ low

3. Description of learner behaviour *during* practical application.

.....
.....
.....

4. How did the majority of the learners fare in activity? good/average/below average

5. Does the teacher apply other supportive strategies?

How?

- a) Modelling
- b) Repeating of instructions in different ways
- c) Demonstration
- d) Any other?

Elaborate.....
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Appendix L: Learner Samples/Scripts Analysis Guide

<p>1. What types of writing activities were done?</p>	<p>Write creative stories in simple past tense with beginning, middle and end</p> <p>Write simple rhyming or free verse poems</p> <p>Write recounts of personal experiences in simple past tense</p> <p>Write factual descriptions using simple and compound sentences.</p> <p>Write explanations to show how things work</p> <p>Write procedures to inform how to do something</p> <p>Write simple interview questions</p> <p>Write statements to show opinion and justification</p> <p>Write cards and invitations</p> <p>Write a friendly letter (From syllabus)</p>
<p>2. Spelling /Grammar/ Sentence construction</p>	<p>Good Average Poor Affect</p> <p>meaningfulness/incoherent</p>
<p>3. What other techniques were applied to help/motivate learners to develop their writing skills?</p>	<p>Doing corrections</p> <p>Ordering thoughts/ideas</p> <p>Rewrite</p> <p>Mind map</p> <p>Editing</p> <p>Publishing</p>
<p>4. What type of feedback and/or follow-up activities were provided?</p>	
<p>5. If tasks were graded, how available and clear are the assessment criteria?</p>	

Appendix M: SRSD Scoring Rubric: Opinion

Tree Scoring Rubric			
Student Name:		Date:	
Essay Title or Prompt:			
TREE Parts	Description	Point Value	Total Points
Topic (Topic introduction)			
	Not present	0	
	Restates the question	1	
	Tells what he or she thinks or believes	1	
	Tells what is coming	1	
Reasons (Note: score only first three reasons)			
Reason #1	Not present	0	
	Provides a reason	1	
	Uses a transition word or phrase	1	
	Explains the reason by giving an example, a detail or a fact	1	
Reason #2	Not present	0	
	Provides a reason	1	
	Uses a transition word or phrase	1	
	Explains the reason by giving an example, a detail or a fact	1	
Reason #3	Not present	0	
	Provides a reason	1	
	Uses a transition word or phrase	1	
	Explains the reason by giving an example, a detail or a fact	1	
			/9
Ending			
	Not present	0	
	Restates wrap-up idea clearly	1	
	Retells the reasons	1	
	Has an wrap-up statement that grabs your attention	1	
TOTAL			/15
Notes/Recommendations/Goals:			

Appendix N: SRSD Scoring Rubric: Narrative

WWW + W=2 H=2 (Gr. 2)					
Name:		Date:			
Essay Topic:		Point Value	Self	Peer	Adult
Appropriate to Task					
	Strong connections to the text (2 or more)	1			
Who? (Narrator and/or Characters)					
	Character's personality is shown (2 per point)	2			
	Dialogue	1			
When? (Situation: Time)					
	Provides detailed sense of time (sunny day or early afternoon)	1			
Where? (Situation: Setting)					
	Names detailed location (deep, dark forest)	1			
What does the character do or want to do? (kick off)					
	Character(s) responds to events (with implicit or stated goal) Kick-off is present, works well and is interesting, creative, unusual	1			
What Happens? (Organized event sequence that unfolds naturally)					
	Recounts a well elaborated event or short sequence of events	1			
	Use temporal words and phrases to signal event order	1			
	Includes details to describe actions, thoughts, events, and feelings 1 point for 2 details	3			
How Does the Story End?					
	Provide sense of closure	1			
How Does the Character Feel/React? What is Learned? (Wrap Up)					
	Character's final response to events conveyed	1			
	Central message wraps up	1			
Conventions					
	CCSS grade level: handwriting, spelling, punctuation, grammar (<i>Individualised</i>)	4			
Planning					
	Notes, plans, improvements and rewrites made are visible or attached	1			
Total		20			
Done Well:					
Goals:					

Registered with the South African Translators' Institute (SATI)

Reference number 1000686

14 February 2024

***EXPLORING THE STRATEGIES USED FOR TEACHING CREATIVE WRITING SKILLS IN GRADE 3: A
CASE OF TWO NAMIBIAN SCHOOLS***

This confirms that I edited substantively the above document, including a Reference list. The document was returned to the author with various tracked changes to correct errors and clarify meaning. It was the author's responsibility to attend to these changes.

Yours faithfully



Dr. K. Zano

Ph.D. in English

kufazano@gmail.com/kufazano@yahoo.com

+27631434276