The effectiveness of the Primary School Reading Improvement Programme for Grade 6

English First Additional Language learners

By

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Declaration

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Matshediso Julian Khabele   Date: 06/02/2024

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3 July 2024

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my dear sister, Azania Mabasa, who unfortunately left this earth on the 3rd of September 2021 after a short illness. She prayed so much for me and motivated me to complete my studies. I can't start to imagine how excited she would be to see me graduate with my master's degree. We shared so much and had so much in common, and I miss her dearly. It has been so emotional for me to actually write this piece, as it reminds me of her. I pray that I finally heal and take courage in knowing that I completed my studies and that my sister would be so proud of me. Aus Malja, your death broke my heart into pieces, I trust the Lord to heal it and make it whole again. Continue to rest well my darling, you will forever be in my heart.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANA	Annual National Assessment
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
EFAL	English First Additional Language
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
HOD	Head Of Department
IEA	The International Association for the Evaluation of education Achievement
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Material
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NECT	National Educational Collaboration Trust
NEEDU	The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit.
ORF	Oral Reading Fluency
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy.
PSRIP	Primary School Reading Improvement Programme.

REAP	Rural Education Assistants' Programme
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SACMEQ	Southern Africa Consortium for measuring Educational Quality.
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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Abstract

This study explored the effectiveness of the Primary School Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP) for English First Additional Language (EFAL). The PSRIP is a reading programme introduced by the Minister of Education, which aims to assist with literacy challenges South Africa currently faces in its primary schools. The study also explored the experiences of teachers in using the PSRIP, since they are the responsible for implementing the programme in the classroom.

The results of the latest Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), which South Africa participated in in 2021, were released in May 2023. These revealed that 81% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning. One should keep in mind that South Africa experienced COVID-19 from 2021. However, PIRLs results issued in 2016 also showed that most learners in South Africa cannot read, and those who can read cannot read for meaning (Spaull, 2017).

A case study research design was used in this study with a qualitative approach. Two primary schools based in Johannesburg West in Gauteng formed the basis of this study, with seven teachers participating. To capture how teachers are experiencing the programme and how learners are performing with use of the PSRIP, the researcher used class observations and conducted semi-structured interviews.

Data was analysed using the following themes: reading challenges, reading without understanding, learners who cannot read at all, lack of phonics knowledge, and training and support for teachers on the improvement programme. More themes and sub-themes concerning reading challenges emerged from the data and are discussed in Chapter Four.

The findings of the study revealed that challenges with reading as a skill in primary schools are cause for concern. The researcher observed reading lessons from the two schools and more data about the challenges of reading and teaching learners how to read were revealed. From the observed lessons, it became clear that PSRIP is not well implemented in schools as some teachers could hardly ever present the lesson smoothly

without putting their eyes off the blue cover book which is said to be PSRIP resource material. While this could be resulted to lack of planning as well, data obtained from interviews revealed that teachers are not quite clear on how the PSRIP works.

The researcher observed learners in Grade 6 classes who do not know how to read at all. From the observed lessons also, it was also revealed that teachers did not make reading lessons interesting to the learners. Data obtained from the interviews revealed that most teachers are not trained with PSRIP hence they are struggling with implementing the programme.

The recommendations and suggestions for future research will assist other researchers to conduct similar research, and curriculum designers with making necessary changes concerning the curriculum and the main curriculum implementers, who are the teachers.

Keywords: Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS); Curriculum; Primary School; PSRIP Programme; Reading

Sesotho Translation;

Kakaretso

Phuputso ena e hlahlobile katleho ya Lenaneo la Ntlafatso ya ho Bala Sekolong sa Mathomo (PSRIP) bakeng sa Puo ya Pele ya Tlatsetso ya Senyesemane (EFAL). PSRIP ke lenaneo la ho bala le hlahisitsweng ke Letona la Thuto, leo sepheo sa lona e leng ho thusa ka diphephetso tsa ho bala le ho ngola Afrika Borwa tseo hajwale e tobaneng le tsona dikolong tsa yona tsa mathomo. Phuputso e boetse e hlahlobile diphihlelo tsa matitjhere mabapi le ho sebedisa PSRIP, kaha ke bona ba nang le boikarabello ba ho phethahatsa lenaneo phaposing ya ho rutela.

Diphetho tsa Tswelopele ya Phuputso ya ho Bala le ho Ngola ya Matjhabeng ya morao-rao (PIRLS), eo Afrika Borwa e nkileng karolo ho yona ka 2021, di ntshitswe ka Motsheanong 2023. Di senotse hore 81% ya baithuti ba Kereiti ya 4 ha ba tsebe ho balla ho fumana moelelo. Ho lokela ho hopolwa hore Afrika Borwa e bile le COVID-19 ho tloha ka 2021. Leha ho le jwalo, diphetho tsa PIRLs tse ntshitsweng ka 2016 le tsona di

bontshitse hore baithuti ba bangata Afrika Borwa ha ba tsebe ho bala, mme ba tsebang ho bala ha ba kgone ho balla ho fumana moelelo (Spaull, 2017).

Ho ile ha sebediswa moralo wa phuputso ya mohlala phuputsong ena ka mokgwa wa boleng. Dikolo tse pedi tsa mathomo tse Bophirima ba Johannesburg ho la Gauteng di thehile motheo wa phuputso ena, ka matitjhere a supileng a nkileng karolo. Ho fumana hore na matitjhere a na le boiphihlelo jwang ka lenaneo le hore na baithuti ba ntse ba sebetsa jwang ka tshebediso ya PSRIP, mofuputsi o sebedisitse ho shebella ditlelase le dipuisano tse batlang di hlophisitsweng.

Datha e ile ya manollwa ho sebediswa dihlooho tse latelang: diphephetso tsa ho bala, ho bala ntle le ho utlwisisa, baithuti ba sa tsebeng ho bala ho hang, ho hloka tsebo ya medumo, le kwetliso le tshehetso ho matitjhere ka lenaneo la ntlafatso. Dihlooho tse ding le dihloohwana tse mabapi le diphephetso tsa ho bala di hlahile ho datha mme di tshohlwa Kgaolong ya Bone.

Diphumano tsa phuputso di senotse hore diphephetso tsa ho bala e le tsebo dikolong tsa mathomo di baka ngongoreho. Mofuputsi o shebelletse dithuto tsa ho bala dikolong tsena tse pedi mme ho ile ha senolwa datha e nngwe e mabapi le mathata a ho bala le ho ruta baithuti mokgwa wa ho bala. Ho latela dithuto tse shebelletsweng, ho ile ha totobala hore PSRIP ha e sebetse hantle dikolong kaha matitjhere a mang a ne a sitwa ho fana ka thuto ka bothebelele ntle le ho tlosa mahlo a bona bukeng e khavara e putswa eo e leng yona sesebediswa sa mohlodi sa PSRIP. Leha sena se ka bakwa hape ke kgaello ya moralo, datha e fumanweng dipuisanong e senotse hore matitjhere ha a hlakelwa hantle hore na PSRIP e sebetsa jwang.

Mofuputsi o shebelletse baithuti ba Kereiti ya 6 ba sa tsebeng ho bala ho hang. Ho latela dithuto tse shebelletsweng hape, ho boetse ho senotswe hore matitjhere ha aa etsa hore dithuto tsa ho bala di natefele baithuti. Datha e fumanweng dipuisanong e bontshitse hore matitjhere a mangata ha a kwetliswa ka PSRIP ka hona a sokola ho kenya lenaneo tshebetsong.

Dikgothaletso le ditlhahiso tsa dipatlisiso tsa nako e tlang di tla thusa bafuputsi ba bang ho etsa patlisiso e tshwanang, le baetsi ba kharikhulamo ka ho etsa diphetoho tse hlokahalang mabapi le kharikhulamo le baphethahatsi ba ka sehloohong ba kharikhulamo, e leng matitjhere.

Mantswe a sehlooho: Setatamente sa Leano la Tlhahlobo ya Kharikhulamo (CAPS); Kharikhulamo; Sekolo sa Mathomo; Lenaneo la PSRIP; Ho bala.

Isizulu Translation;

Okucashuniwe

Lolu cwaningo luhlole ukusebenza ngempumelelo koHlelo Lokuthuthukisa Ukufunda Isikole Samabanga Aphansi (PSRIP) lwesiNgisi Ulimi Lokuqala Lokwengeza (EFAL). I-*PSRIP* iwuhlelo lokufunda olwethulwa nguNgqongqoshe Wezemfundo, okuhloswe ngalo ukusiza ezinseleleni zokufunda nokubhala iNingizimu Afrika ebhekene nazo njengamanje ezikoleni zayo zamabanga aphansi. Ucwaningo luphinde lwahlola ulwazi lothisha ekusebenziseni i-*PSRIP*, njengoba yibona abanesibophezelo sokuqalisa lolu hlelo ekilasini.

Imiphumela yakamuva Yenqubekelaphambili Ocwaningweni Lwamazwe ngamazwe Lokufunda Nokubhala (PIRLS), iNingizimu Afrika ebambe iqhaza kuyo ngo-2021, yakhululwa ngoNhlaba ka- 2023. Lokhu kuveze ukuthi u-81% wabafundi beBanga lesi-4 abakwazi ukufunda ukuze baqonde. Umuntu kufanele akhumbule ukuthi iNingizimu Afrika ihlangabezane ne-COVID-19 kusukela ngo-2021. Nokho, imiphumela ye-PIRLS eyakhishwa ngo-2016 iphinde yabonisa ukuthi iningi labafundi eNingizimu Afrika abakwazi ukufunda, futhi labo abakwazi ukufunda abakwazi ukufundela ukuqonda (Spaull, 2017).

Kusetshenziswe umklamo wocwaningo lwesibonelo kulolu cwaningo ngendlela yokuchaza. Izikole ezimbili zamabanga aphansi ezizinze eNtshonalanga yeGoli eGauteng zenze isisekelo salolu cwaningo, nothisha abayisikhombisa baba yingxenye. Ukuze kutholakale ukuthi othisha babhekana kanjani nohlelo kanye nendlela abafundi abaqhuba ngayo ngokusebenzisa i-PSRIP, umcwaningi wasebenzisa okubhekwayo kwekilasi futhi wenza inhlolokhono enesakhiwo esincane.

Imininingwane yahlaziywa kusetshenziswa lezi zihloko ezilandelayo: izinselele zokufunda, ukufunda ngaphandle kokuqondisisa, abafundi abangakwazi ukufunda nhlobo, ukuntula ulwazi lwemisindo, nokuqeqeshwa nokusekelwa kothisha ohlelweni lokuthuthukisa. Ezinye izindikimba nezindikimbana eziphathelene nezinselele zokufunda zivele emininingwaneni futhi kuxoxwa ngazo eSahlukweni Sesine.

Okutholwe kulolu cwaningo kuveze ukuthi izinselelo zokufunda njengekhono ezikoleni zamabanga aphansi ziyimbangela yokukhathazeka. Umcwaningi ubhekisise izifundo ezifundwa kulezi zikole ezimbili kwavezwa imininingwane eyengeziwe ngezinselelo zokufunda nokufundisa abafundi ukufunda. Ezifundweni ezibhekiwe, kube sobala ukuthi i-PSRIP ayenziwanga kahle ezikoleni njengoba abanye othisha bebengakwazi ukwethula isifundo ngaphandle kokususa amehlo abo encwadini eyikhava eluhlaza okwesibhakabhaka okuthiwa iyinsiza ye-PSRIP. Nakuba lokhu kungase kubangele ukuntuleka kokuhlela, imininingwane etholwe ezingxoxweni iveze ukuthi othisha abanasiqiniseko kahle ukuthi i-PSRIP isebenza kanjani.

Umcwaningi ubheke abafundi beBanga lesi-6 abangazi nhlobo ukufunda. Ezifundweni ezibhekiwe futhi, kwavezwa ukuthi othisha abazenzanga izifundo zokufunda zibe mnandi kubafundi. Imininingwane etholwe ezingxoxweni iveze ukuthi iningi lothisha aliqeqeshwanga ngePSRIP yingakho linenkinga yokuqalisa lolu hlelo.

Izincomo neziphakamiso zocwaningo lwangomuso zizosiza abanye abacwaningi ukuthi benze ucwaningo olufanayo, kanye nabaklami bohlelo lwezifundo ngokwenza izinguquko ezidingekayo mayelana nohlelo lwezifundo kanye nabaqalisi bohlelo lwezifundo abasemqoka, okungothisha.

Amagama asemqoka:
Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)
Isitatimende Senqubomgomo Yokuhlolwa Kohlelo lwezifundo
Curriculum
Uhlelo lwezifundo
Primary School
Isikole samaBanga aphansi
PSRIP Programme
Uhlelo lwe- PSRIP
Reading
Ukufunda

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Internationally, research shows that in many countries around the world – as well as in South Africa – there is concern that learners might not obtain the reading skills needed to succeed in their lives of study at school and at university-level institutions (Cook, Kilgus & Burns, 2018; Hugo, Le Roux, Muller & Nel, 2006). English is a spoken language and subject being taught as an additional or second language in many countries (Macedo, 2019).

Hugo *et al.* (2006) declare that 40% of the children in the United States of America (USA) experienced significant problems in becoming the best readers, and that more than 40% of Grade 4 and Grade 8 learners failed to read at the basic level and to complete grade-level reading lessons. This shows that problems with reading in primary schools has always affected other countries and not just South Africa.

In his State of Nation address in June 2019, President Cyril Ramaphosa spoke about the importance of encouraging a reading nation (Mchunu, 2019). This comes after South Africa ranked last out of 50 countries in the 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) which tested the understanding of reading of Grade 4 learners (Willenberg, 2018). The study showed that about 78% of South African learners at this level could not read for meaning (Willenberg, 2018).

Reading problems are mostly encountered by Grade 4 learners, especially when it comes to reading with English First Additional Language (EFAL). The PIRLS results indicated that less than 20% of township school learners, especially those in Grade 4, reached the 40% mark, compared to 96% learners who managed to do so in 49 other countries (Howie, Combrink, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, & McLeod Palane, 2017).

The aim of the EFAL curriculum is to develop certain skills in a holistic way. These skills include, among others, listening and speaking, reading and viewing, writing and presenting skills. Since the implementation of CAPS, reading and viewing skills in English have been challenging for the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6) learners. This might be

caused by the fact that CAPS states that English is the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) from Grade 4 onwards in most primary schools in South Africa.

In the foundation phase in most township schools in South Africa, the LoLT is an African language. Then when learners move to Grade 4, the LoLT changes to English (Pretorius, 2014). This transition is not smooth for most learners in public schools, as they are used to being taught in their mother tongue in the foundation phase.

Shayne (2020) asserts that in South Africa, African home language learners are finding it hard to switch to English-only lessons from Grade 4 onwards. The sudden switch from being taught in one's own language in the first three years of school to being taught in English as the LoLT may be one of the reasons why Intermediate Phase learners, especially those in Grade 6, have challenges with reading as a skill. Basic skills in literacy are to be learnt first for the purposes of doing well throughout the school years, and also for economic development and stability through the ability to take part in the labour market effectively (De Vos, 2014).

As one of the EFAL teachers, the researcher has realised how learners in public schools face difficulties when it comes to reading as a skill, especially reading in English. This is also found in a study by Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016): after obtaining data from 159 teachers and 30 schools across three provinces, they discovered that in general teachers did not seem to have a clear understanding of reading concepts, reading development and reading methodology.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has implemented several interventions to combat the literacy and reading challenges. One of the intervention programmes is Primary School Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP), which is key to this study (DBE, 2016). The PSRIP is designed to improve reading across Grades 1-6. The main aim of this study is to discover the effectiveness of implementation of the PSRIP in two schools in Gauteng, as they are already using the programme.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The PSRIP is a fast-paced, high-impact reading and support programme which was birthed by the South African Council for Educators (SACE) (National Educational Collaboration Trust (NECT), 2016). It is further described as a national reading programme which the Director General and the Minister of Basic Education have asked the DBE to design (NECT, 2016). This programme is aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning in public schools (NECT, 2016). It has been certified as a professional development programme by SACE and is assumed to be appropriate for the everyday requirements of teachers and learners (NECT, 2016).

Reading and writing skills in EFAL are areas where it is considered to be challenging to achieve language competence in classrooms in Canada (Sebetoa, 2016). This is also applicable to South Africa. The DBE has stated that the 2011 Annual National Assessment (ANA) results have deteriorated since the regular testing from 2008 (DBE, 2011). A comparison was made between the 2008 Grade 3 results and the 2011 Grade 6 results, and it showed a decrease in performance (DBE, 2012).

The most recent introduction of the PIRLS reading framework provides valuable information on how teachers can apply reading strategies that not only adhere to understanding of texts but also cater for diversity (Mullis & Martin, 2015). Even with the availability of these reading strategies, some learners still struggle to read. This is a matter of great concern, and with reading being one of the four skills required in EFAL, it is an issue that needs to be attended to.

The Foreword by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, to the CAPS documents also states that the present curriculum is shaped on the curriculum in the previous National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (DBE, 2011a). These documents are the most recent iteration of a curriculum reform process that started in South Africa in 1997.

The Minister further stated that more changes to the 1997 national curriculum have been made to date in order to meet the needs and wants of the learners (DBE, 2011b). Despite the changes made to the curriculum to meet the needs and wants of learners, literacy levels across South Africa imply that Intermediate Phase learners are not performing as

expected in literacy, specifically on assessment tasks that are linked to reading and writing (DBE, 2011b).

Against this background, it is understandable that there are challenges in reading in English in primary schools in South Africa. Since the implementation of the PSRIP its effectiveness has not been thoroughly evaluated. To fill this significant void, this descriptive research study will investigate the effectiveness of this reading programme in primary schools, focusing on Grade 6.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

It has been acknowledged by the DBE that literacy levels in South African primary schools are low, and that improvement programmes are needed (DBE, 2019b). Curriculum transformations resulted in the development of national assessment tools such as systemic evaluation and the ANA, including the Early Grade Reading Assessment, the Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) and the PIRLS.

These studies revealed that South African learners show very low levels of doing well in the basic skills of literacy (Mullis & Martin, 2015). Spaull (2017) asserts that South African learners came 10th out of 14 education systems which were assessed for reading. His report about an overview of the quality of education in South Africa shows that Grade 6 learner performance in SACMEQ II AND III revealed unacceptably low levels of reading competency.

Furthermore, in SACMEQ III, 27% of Grade 6 learners in South Africa were found to be illiterate, because they could not read and comprehend a short and simple passage (Spaul, 2013). This implies that these learners have not developed basic reading skills (pre-reading, emergent reading, basic reading, reading for meaning, and interpretive reading). The researcher is a primary school teacher and has had the privilege of teaching in about three primary schools. What the researcher has experienced over the years is that most learners have problems in reading, and this issue prompted her to

delve into carrying out research on a programme which aims to improve the reading skills of primary school learners.

In realising that reading in primary schools is a challenge, the DBE came up with the Programme as a way of improving the reading skills of learners in primary schools (NECT, 2016).

This programme is implemented in order to lay the foundations for a reading society, and it also has material which is designed to help teachers with teaching reading as a skill, as well as material designed to help learners to be effective readers (NECT, 2016). These materials are aligned with CAPS and therefore the researcher would like to explore the effectiveness of the PSRIP in improving reading in public schools (NECT, 2016).

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The researcher has been a primary school teacher for more than eight years, and over this time has seen how learners in the Intermediate Phase struggle to read different texts in EFAL classrooms. The research also saw how it was problematic for EFAL teachers to help learners to read well and comprehend information. The researcher has chosen this topic of study because of its relevance to her as a teacher.

In 2019 the school where the researcher is currently teaching was chosen to be one of the pilot schools in Johannesburg in Gauteng province for teaching EFAL using the new PSRIP programme. As an EFAL educator, the researcher would like to explore the effectiveness of the PSRIP programme both for EFAL teachers and for learners.

The interest is in discovering how the programme enhances learners' reading skills and in how teachers are experiencing the programme. PSRIP materials are user-friendly and designed to guide teachers on how to use them. It is therefore important that language departments within schools are proactive in ensuring that EFAL educators are able to use the PSRIP material well enough, and to identify any challenges they face so that they may teach reading skills successfully with guidance from the PSRIP material. EFAL teachers need to be orientated regarding the programme to ensure that they understand

fully how the PSRIP material is to be used, thereby producing the expected results (NECT, 2016).

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the PSRIP, a reading programme aimed to improve the reading skills of EFAL learners in primary schools. This is necessary since literacy problems have been cause for concern in South African for many years now. This study is of great importance as its findings will help curriculum planners to consider changes which can be made to CAPS. Also, this study is important as it will help to provide the DBE with information on the effectiveness of this primary school reading programme. The significance of this study is also that if the findings about the programme are positive, this will help the DBE with deciding whether to fully implement the PSRIP in all government primary schools. Negative results or findings will help the DBE to work on the programme in order to ensure that it produces good results in reading.

The findings from this study will also help language teachers regarding methods and strategies they can apply in the classroom in order to create a reading culture. The findings will also help teachers to allow learners to be active participants in their classrooms.

1.6 THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

LibGuides at the University of Southern California (2012) indicates that theories are formulated to explain, predict and understand phenomena and, in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of the critical assumptions.

A theoretical framework is therefore the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study; it introduces and describes the theory which explains why the research problem under study exists. In this study the researcher used the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and the concept of scaffolding from the paradigm of social constructivism. Since Vygotsky's (1978) research and theories are collectively involved

in social constructivism and language development, including the ZPD, they will be discussed further in Chapter Two as part of the theoretical framework that the researcher focused on.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question of this study is as follows:

What is the effectiveness of a Primary School Reading Improvement Programme for Grade 6 English First Additional Language learners?

With reference to the main research question, the following sub-questions formed the basis of this study and were used to answer the main research question:

- What are the teachers' experiences of using the PSRIP for Grade 6 learners?
- How effective is the PSRIP for reading in Grade 6?
- How do learners perform with use of the PSRIP?

1.8 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The broad aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the Primary School Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP) for Grade 6 EFAL learners in two schools in the Gauteng province of South Africa.

The research objectives are as follows:

- To discover the experiences of teachers who are using the PSRIP programme.
- To explore how effective the PSRIP is for reading in Grade 6.
- To identify whether the PSRIP improves reading for Grade 6 learners.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 Research design

This study followed a case study research design as defined by Yin (2014), as a research strategy that provides more knowledge and understanding about the phenomenon in real-life situations. In this study the phenomenon is the effectiveness of the reading programme. Following a case study design will allow the researcher to gain more knowledge on what the PSRIP is and how it works.

This design approach is best suited for this research study, as it gave the researcher a detailed understanding about the PSRIP, which is the study area, with teachers as the participants, by providing additional information about reading effectiveness. The case studies have thus explored the effectiveness of the PSRIP in EFAL in Grade 6. Data was collected from two schools, making this a multiple case study. A multiple case study or collective case study is concerned with analysis of a number of cases to probe matters affecting people or their condition and circumstances. When the case studies are compared to each other, the researcher also can provide the literature with important information regarding differences and/or similar aspects (Vannoni, 2015). Using the multiple case study design has provided different views of teachers' experiences with the PSRIP.

1.9.2 Research paradigm

In this study the researcher used social constructivism as the research paradigm. In social constructivism the emphasis is placed on interaction between the learner and the other people (Pritchard, 2014); in other words, knowledge is constructed through interaction between teacher and learner in a classroom setting. Furthermore, the role of the teacher in the social constructivist approach shifts from being the sole dispenser of knowledge to being a motivator or a resource person. In addition, social constructivists view learning as a social activity that involves sharing and application through the ZPD.

The main theorist of this branch of constructivism is Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky (1978), important learning by the child occurs through social interaction with a more

knowledgeable other. The 'other' may model behaviours or even give verbal instructions for the child. In a primary school this 'other' may be the teacher, who will be the one modelling certain behaviours or giving verbal instructions.

Similarly, Bruner (1986) asserts that social interaction in a classroom is good for learning. For Bruner learning is viewed as an active process where learners are able to construct new knowledge based on their current or past knowledge (Rhalmi, 2017). Learners are not passive but are involved in the process of learning and teaching. Furthermore, social constructivism happens when the teacher works with groups in his/her class or when they work with individuals in a dialogue and help where necessary to support the development of understanding (Kapur, 2019). Social constructivism in a class could be demonstrated where the EFAL teacher engages with learners on reading lessons and guiding them on how to read.

1.9.3 Research approach

This study is qualitative in nature. The subject of study was to discover the effectiveness of the PSRIP, with interest in how the programme will work in order to help with reading as a skill. Realising that there is no research as yet about the PSRIP, questions which were asked included: 'How is the programme aimed at teaching and learning of reading skills in EFAL classrooms in two schools in Gauteng?', and 'How do learners in two schools in Gauteng perform when using the PSRIP programme?'.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) posit that the qualitative approach is used in order to have more knowledge about the environment and settings in which participants in a study address an issue. The study aims to explore the effectiveness of the PSRIP in the Intermediate Phase in the context of two primary schools that have learners in Grade 6 who are following this programme. The study is qualitative in nature as the researcher wants to understand the challenges of reading and how the programme will meet these challenges.

1.10 SAMPLING

This study used purposive sampling, where the researcher intentionally selected participants and sites to understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2016). For this study, two schools were sampled with purpose of understanding the central phenomenon, which is PSRIP. These two schools are in Johannesburg West in Gauteng. Schools are appropriate sites for the research study because they are already teaching EFAL using the PSRIP programme.

The participants in the study are EFAL teachers who are teaching Grade 6 in the two primary schools. They were purposely chosen because of their experiences of teaching EFAL were considered. Seven participants were selected, three teachers from one school and four from the other. All 7 participants were purposely chosen also because in their respective schools, they have all taught EFAL before the implementation of PSRIP also, they are currently teaching EFAL grade 6 using PSRIP in their schools. The researcher has had meetings at these schools therefore I chose them because I thought they would likely agree to be participants in the study. The participants were chosen because they specialised with languages in their studies at university.

1.11 INSTRUMENTS AND DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Data collection instruments used in this qualitative research to explore the effectiveness of the PSRIP in primary schools include observations and semi-structured Interviews.

1.11.1 Observations

Observation as a procedure of data collection gathers open-ended information through observing people and places in the context where the study is taking place (Creswell, 2016). Generally, observation helps the researcher to find out what is going on (Kabir, 2016) in the surrounding environment; however, as a data collection method, it is further than just listening and looking. They give you the opportunity to provide rich, detailed descriptions of the social setting in your field notes and to view unscheduled events,

improve interpretation, and develop new questions to be asked of informants (DeMunck & Sobo, 1998).

There are also disadvantages to using observation. DeMunck and Sobo (1998) suggest several: 1. You may not always be interested in what happens behind the scenes. 2. You may find interpretation of what you observe to be hindered, 3. when key informants only admit you into situations to observe that are already familiar to you.

Another consideration and potential limitation of a study using observations is researcher bias. As Ratner (2002) pointed out, you need to acknowledge your own biases and put aside those biases as much as possible to be able to view the data neutrally and make accurate interpretations. You need to be aware of your own biases to properly understand what you are observing; it is important to understand what is going on in the setting from the perspective of the participants.

Observing chosen EFAL teachers while presenting a reading lesson using the PSRIP helped the researcher to see how the PSRIP is implemented in classrooms. The researcher could compare those teachers` answers with the observations for data triangulation purposes.

The researcher's role was that of a non-participant observer, which Creswell (2016) describes as a person who visits the context and makes detailed notes of things that he or she witnesses while not actually getting involved in the activities in the context. Unstructured observation took place as the researcher used her diary and notepad to write about events that unfolded during the observation. Observations took place in the classroom to find out how the programme is implemented and how the learners react to it. This tool of observation links with the second research sub-question that asks how learners experience the PSRIP.

1.11.2 Semi-structured interviews

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) found that semi-structured interviews are used to gain an in-depth view of participants` opinions about a specific topic. Yin (2014) revealed

that semi-structured interviews are beneficial when working with a complex issue, because one is allowed to probe by asking unplanned questions to explore and deepen understanding. While there can be more advantages for using interviews as data collecting tool for qualitative research, there can be weaknesses two. Some interviewees could respond less to 'obvious' topics or subjects that are the interviewees too ashamed to speak about (Nguyen, 2015)

The researcher held interviews with EFAL teachers from two primary schools. Interviews allowed the researcher to use follow-up questions to certain responses in order to gain more clarity. Semi-structured interviews allowed for probing in this regard. Face-to-face interviews were held where the teachers answered questions about changes which the PSRIP brought to how reading is taught, and how the PSRIP material is used to enhance the reading skills of learners.

1.12 DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher used content analysis, where she gave codes to the data to form common themes. According to Creswell and Clark (2011), data is analysed by using the following procedure: code the data, assign labels to the codes, group codes into themes, interrelate themes. In this study, data collected through observations was separated from the data that was collected through semi-structured interviews.

Data collected from semi-structured interviews was matched together with data collected from observations, in order to identify similarities and dissimilarities between them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data collected from the interviews was transcribed (Berg & Lune, 2012). The researcher used the theory of ZPD as well as relevant literature to analyse data in order to evaluate whether learners are able to improve their reading skills with the help of the teacher and peers as more knowledgeable others, using the PSRIP.

1.13 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND VALIDITY

Qualitative researchers focus on dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability as the criteria regarding trustworthiness for ensuring the rigour of qualitative

findings (Connelly, 2016). This study implemented the above-mentioned four elements to assess the trustworthiness of the study and guarantee the consistency and truthfulness of the research findings.

1.13.1 Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability indicates that the study should be reported in such a way that others could arrive at similar interpretations if they review the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This can be enhanced by carefully documenting all the research activities and the conclusions or any changes that may occur as the research evolves. Such documentations can then be reviewed by an outside researcher to examine their accuracy and the extent to which the conclusions are grounded in the data.

Dependability also refers to the consistency and reliability of the research findings, to check the degree to which research processes are verified by allowing someone from outside the research to evaluate the research process (Streubert & Carpenter, 2007). Credibility relates to the extent to which the source is free from error and distortion (Dunne, Pettigrew, & Robinson, 2016). The principle of *credibility* in qualitative research concerns the extent to which the research findings and conclusions can be viewed to be believable. In other words, it concerns the truthfulness of the findings and the extent to which they reflect the reality of the phenomenon investigated. To achieve this, the researcher needs to ensure that his or her understanding of the research participants, context, and processes are as accurate and complete as possible and that the interpretations are inclusive.

McMillan & Schumacher, (2010) defines credibiIn this study, the researcher allowed peer researchers to critique the data collection tools and transcripts to ensure that they were dependable enough.

1.13.2 Credibility

lity is as the accuracy of research findings and conclusions. Spending time observing participants (teachers) revealed hidden behavioural patterns, and writing notes on my diary and notepad while observing them ensured the integrity of the research findings.

1.13.3 Transferability

Lincoln & Guba, (1985) assert that transferability concerns the extent to which the researchers' interpretation or conclusions are transferable to other similar contexts. This requires thorough and rich description of the research activities and assumptions. Transferability can be compared to generalizability in quantitative research. However, since qualitative research is interpretive and the participants are often small in number and not representative of the population, the findings cannot be generalizable in the sense used in quantitative research. Transferability should not be meant for the researcher to make generalizable claims but instead to provide sufficient details that make transfer possible in case readers wish to do so.

The difficulty when it comes to qualitative research is situational uniqueness, according to Teane (2007). This means that the participants in this study may not relate to each other, which can cause the conclusions of the study not to be transferable. As this is a qualitative study that is interested in findings on the understanding of participants in particular settings, the need for transferability is not of main importance. This study used rich data and descriptions to ensure that the study is as accurate as possible.

1.13.4 Confirmability

According to Anney (2014), confirmability refers to the fact that findings from the research could be authenticated by other researchers in the field. This means that other educational researchers could be able to authenticate the research findings when this study is complete. Furthermore, confirmability concerns the extent to which others confirm the researcher's interpretations and conclusions (Lincoln & Guba,1985). While quantitative research seeks objectivity by dissociating the researcher from the research process, qualitative research emphasizes the researcher's active role and engagement in the research. It also resembles replicability, which concerns the extent to which a study can be reproduced. In qualitative research, confirmability can be established by describing the data and the findings in such a way that their accuracy can be confirmed by others. One useful strategy is 'audit trail' where the researcher records and rationalizes all the steps taken and the decisions made regarding the data coding and analysis. These

records become then available for any further evaluation and confirmation (Lincoln & Guba,1985).

The researcher has checked and rechecked the data to verify them and allowed the participants (teachers) to read the transcripts to verify that the data were a true reflection of what they meant to convey.

1.14 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Data was collected after receiving ethical clearance and permission to conduct the study. The researcher applied for UNISA`s research ethics approval certificate. Consent letters were sent to ask for permission to conduct the study from the DBE, schools involved and the teachers. The researcher asked for consent via permission letters from parents to permit her to observe the learners' marks and to look at documents relating to their children to gauge performance.

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, should they wish to do so, and that all information collected will be treated as strictly confidential. Pseudonyms were used to keep all identification confidential, whether it related to people (principals, teachers, and learners) or to the schools. Information received from the participants has been kept safe in secured lockers to prevent anyone from having access to it. This information will be disposed of after five years.

1.15 DEFINITION OF THE KEY CONCEPTS
❖ **Curriculum:** is a broad concept which may include all planned activities and thus, also subject courses which take place during the normal school day. It also includes after- school planned activities, such as societies and sports.
❖ **Primary school**: A formal place for grades R to 7 where teaching and learning takes place.
❖ **CAPS:** A national Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement is a single, comprehensive and concise policy document introduced by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2012).

❖ **PSRIP:** Primary School Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP) is a fast-paced, high-impact reading programme and support programme endorsed by South African Council for Educators (SACE) (NECT, 2016). It is a programme introduced to South African learners to improve reading**.**

❖ **Reading:** The use of texts to decode in order to understand the meaning of the written word.

1.16 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The thesis includes five chapters which provide a detailed report about the English FAL curriculum and the PSRIP programme. These two were linked together and supported by relevant literature, to ascertain how the programme is aimed at helping learners to read.

Chapter One: This first chapter of the study provides an introduction and outlines the context of the research. Literature on the EFAL curriculum is also provided, and data about how Intermediate Phase learners across the country, especially those in Grade 6, are struggling to read. The PSRIP programme is described and how it links with the EFAL curriculum and its aims and objectives. Furthermore, this chapter identifies the aim and the research question and sub-questions which the whole study is focused on answering. The motivation and rationale of the researcher to carry out this study and the aims and objectives are also described.

Chapter Two: This chapter gives an overview of the previously published works about EFAL curriculum and reading difficulties that Grade 6 EFAL learners face during reading lessons. Relevant literature on reading is outlined, which contributes to the existing body of knowledge about the EFAL curriculum and PSRIP. Moreover, it presents a review of literature on the reading programmes which have been implemented by the DBE, and how the PSRIP is aimed at helping learners to improve their reading skills.

Chapter Three: This is the methodology chapter, which provides a framework of the research methods and techniques that the researcher used in carrying out this study. These methods clearly define how data was collected and how it will be stored. The new

subject of this qualitative study is to discover the effectiveness of the PSRIP. A case study research design was used, as described by Yin (2018) as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. The researcher purposively selected two schools in Gauteng to collect data from. As the data was collected from two schools, this makes the study a multiple case study.

Chapter Four: This chapter addresses the totality of the outcomes from the study and provides the findings on the effectiveness of the PSRIP. It also outlines all other data obtained from the two schools and the experiences of the researcher throughout the whole research process. The findings were guided by the research questions and also what transpired during the interviews with the participants. Themes were formed to analyse the data.

Chapter Five: This is the last chapter, which discusses the summary, findings, recommendations, limitations and delimitations of the study and the implications of the study. It also highlights the importance of this study. Themes are used to summarise the findings revealed in Chapter Four.

1.17 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter serves to provide the orientation to the whole study about PSRIP. It highlighted important aspects such as what the PSRIP is and why the researcher is interested in discovering more about it. The chapter also clearly outlined the steps or methods which are going to be taken in conducting this study. The next chapter, which is the literature review chapter, will place emphasis on reading and reading problems which are encountered by EFAL learners in primary schools in South Africa and other African countries.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Primary School Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP). This reading programme is aimed at improving the reading skills of those learners who are not doing English as their Home Language or First Language; they are commonly called English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners in primary schools. To explore this purpose, the following literature has been reviewed in this chapter: other reading programmes which have been implemented in the past with the aim of improving reading, and the current state of reading in the country, to give a clear explanation of why this research needed to be conducted. What EFAL is as well as who are EFAL learners, and the meaning and importance of reading are also discussed, as they are key aspects of this research. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for EFAL and literature about PSRIP strategies, learning and teaching material are also examined.

This chapter is based on literature from accredited journals, textbooks, formal reports, conference proceedings, master's dissertations, doctoral theses, and other accredited sources of information. It also provides empirical research and a theoretical framework to discuss the reading challenges, reading strategies and programmes in primary schools.

2.2 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Reading is a global phenomenon and a topic of academic interest in developing and developed countries. The literacy crisis faced by South Africa is challenging. In the PIRLS 2016 study, results revealed that (78%) of South African Grade 4 learners cannot understand what they read, and that is a cause for concern (Howie, Combrinck, Tshele, Roux, McLeod Palane, & Mokoena, (2017). As a developing country, South Africa is faced with challenges pertaining to its education system and educational programmes, which include reading problems in language subjects (Maarma & Lamont-Mbawuli, 2017). These challenges impact on the number of learners who cannot read and write in our country.

The Eastern Cape Department of Education gave out Vula Bula reading concepts to primary schools in 2019 and 2020. These anthologies are meant to make reading in African languages easy. This implies that reading challenges are not only experienced in EFAL but also in African languages. The 2022 Reading Panel Background Report states that recent studies have revealed statistically significant advantages for the cohorts that received the anthologies compared to those that did not (Spaull, 2023). The 2030 Reading Panel, which was chaired by Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, calls for fundamental reforms to ensure that all children are able to read for meaning by the age 10 years in 2030 (Spaull, 2023). The next section will discuss the Sustainable Development Goals (2030).

2.2.1 Sustainable Development Goals (2030) on quality education

Reading challenges do not affect South Africa alone; other nations also face these challenges, as indicated by UNESCO`S Sustainable Development Goals (2030). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a worldwide commitment by the international community to eliminate poverty by achieving sustainable development by 2030 (UNESCO, 2015). It consists of 17 driven goals, with Sustainable Development Goal 4 dedicated to "guarantee inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UNESCO, 2016:173). The Department of Basic Education's mission is to ensure that by 2030 all 10-year-olds can read for meaning (DBE, 2022). This mission is similar to the objectives which Sustainable Development Goal 4 wants to achieve by 2030.

A report on the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy by Dr M.J. Maboya highlighted more aims and objectives of the DoE for 2030 (DoE, 2021). Among other things, he gave an update on the programmes which the department is relying on to improve literacy and numeracy for primary school learners. According to this report, by 2030, the DoE wants to ensure that all learners complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, leading to applicable and successful learning outcomes (DoE, 2021). This is an indication that the DoE understands that there are low literacy levels among primary

school learners, and it is willing to do something about this challenge. Dr Maboya also stated that by 2030 South Africa needs an education system which is of high quality and globally competitive (DoE, 2021).

The report also highlighted the three goals of the DBE, goal two being that they want to make sure that there is high number of learners in Grade 6, who by the end of the year will have conquered the minimum language and mathematics competencies for that grade (DBE, 2020). This seems to indicate that the Department is aware of the literacy and numeracy challenges which Grade 6 learners are currently facing. Their aims and objectives are aligned with UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 (DBE, 2022). Sustainable Development Goal 4 targets put emphasis on an international commitment for all countries to make sure that every child has the right to quality education for rest of their lives (UNESCO, 2017).

Sustainable Development Goal 4 suggests that by 2030 learners must have gained, among others, the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, and gender equality (UNESCO, 2022). By 2030 there needs to be a great increase in the number of qualified teachers, including working together with all countries for teachers training in developing countries, especially the least developed countries and Small Island Developing States (DBE, 2022). This will help South Africa as a developing country, especially in training educators on how to deliver content such as reading. The Sustainable Development Goal target is also to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education, so that they are ready for primary education (UNESCO, 2017). If the foundation is strong, learners will not have to struggle with reading skills when they reach the Intermediate Phase. As the SDG targets are met, by 2030 there will be hope for developing countries like South Africa, that they will have high literacy skills.

The present study is concerned with exploring the effectiveness of a reading programme; therefore, it is important to understand what reading means. The next section looks at the literature on reading.

2.2.2 The meaning and importance of reading

Before we unpack the levels of reading in primary schools across the world, it is important to understand the concept of 'reading' and also to elaborate on why it is regarded as an important skill. Reading is defined by Smahillah (2014) as a process which includes skills such as decoding, making predictions and asking questions. It is further explained that this process involves knowledge of high frequency words, use of contextual clues to understand unfamiliar vocabulary, and reaching into their background knowledge to make connections from what they know to what they want to learn (Collier, 2017).

Reading is also viewed as the first pillar of literacy, that engages young learners to immerse themselves in it frequently and deeply (Frankel, Becker, Rowe & Pearson, 2016). It is for this reason that readers do not only do it at school but also at home.

Krashen (2004) states that we learn how to read by actually engaging with different texts, not really through repeating concepts, and in that way, learners become good readers because they would be exposed to different texts. The PIRLS (2016) Reading Framework asserts that reading literacy is strongly associated with the motives that push people to read – it could be reading for pleasure or reading to understand a text. Young learners are mostly interested in reading texts which tell stories, so they will use their storybooks or picture books (PIRLS, 2017). The focus is on reading and how important it is for teaching young minds the correct methods and ways of reading.

Reading is of critical importance in education. Sobkowiak (2016) testifies to the benefits of reading through research which found that reading was able to enhance the critical thinking skills of learners. This means that the more learners read, the more knowledgeable they become.

Furthermore, Kurniaman and Yuliani's (2018) research in Indonesia showed that reading was not just limited to language texts, but other subjects which increased knowledge. They found that reading provided the learner with the necessary language skills at primary school level (Kurniaman & Yuliani, 2018). Hence, reading is treated as an important

aspect to consider at primary school level, so that learners increase their knowledge in all school subjects throughout their basic and tertiary education.

The early reading of most young learners often includes reading of narrative texts that tell a story (e.g. storybooks or picture books) or information texts that tell learners about the world around them and answer questions (Baker & Beall, 2009). Furthermore, knowing how to read gives a person self-confidence in modern society, and as part of an international community (Hisken, 2011). It is for this reason that learners who cannot read properly seem to have low self-esteem and find it hard to participate in class.

Knowing how to read also makes it possible for learners to be creative and critical thinkers in a world which keeps on evolving globally (Gina, 2017). It gives speedy, ready access to new information and knowledge that will help those who read to be lifelong learners. However, as much as literature reveals how important reading is – especially for language development – learners still struggle to read, which is a cause for concern.

Reading programmes have been used to assist learners to read, especially in developing countries. One such programme is the PSRIP used in South Africa and in other parts of the world. PIRLS (2016) defines reading literacy as being able to understand and use vocabulary words in writing (Mullis & Martin, 2015. PIRLS (2016) further explains that readers can make meaning from reading different types of texts. Readers read to gain knowledge, to engage in places such as schools and in everyday life, and they can also read for fun (Mullis & Martin, 2015). This view of reading reflects numerous theories of reading literacy as a constructive and interactive process (Kintsch, 2018).

Before, during, and after reading are crucial stages of the reading process that are also described in the CAPS document in South Africa (DBE 2011b). Every reader should use these phases to build their toolkit of linguistic techniques, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, as well as background knowledge, to construct meaning (Baker & Beall, 2009).

These stages help learners to understand the text they are reading better, unlike the old method of reading where reading would be done without comprehension. Moreover, Nkomo, (2021) observed that reading can have multiple benefits on a child`s development. This includes having comprehension skills and social skills. Also, if learners

are not able to read, they will be unable to comprehend the entire text (Collier, 2021). With the many benefits of reading, the issue of making reading worthwhile to learners remains. Therefore, this research is aimed at exploring whether reading can be enhanced using a reading programme.

2.2.3 Perspective of developed and developing countries on reading.

In developed countries such as New Zealand, Canada, Australia and Sweden, to mention few, reading has been increasing at a very fast pace. These are recognised as the top-ranked nations or regions, and their economies are prosperous. Nearly 50% of the student participants in these nations were found to be excellent readers (Noble & Holt, 2018). The next section will discuss reading skills in developed countries.

2.2.3.1 Reading skills in developed countries

2.2.3.1.1 China

China is a developed country which keeps on increasing production its own resources. However, according to studies, teaching and learning in rural Chinese schools is of worse quality than in urban schools, reading resources are not enough for all learners, and teachers are less qualified, all of which contribute to lower levels of self-confidence in learning of rural students (Li & Li, 2014). In current debates on students' confidence in Asian countries, it was found that when compared to students in urban China, rural Chinese students have lower levels of self-confidence in learning (Zhang, 2016).

After comparing results to the other 45 countries and regions in the PIRLS, it was found that rural China ranks at the very bottom in confidence in reading (Wiseman & Zhao, 2020). About 11% of the learners regarded themselves as perfect readers, while 68% described themselves only as somewhat confident readers, meaning they still struggle with reading (Zhang, 2016). Another study by Lin, Tzou, Lu, & Hung, (2021) revealed that China ranked among the lowest, about 20% of the findings show that rural Chinese kids demonstrate poor levels of reading. Rural China has the worst performance in this area of all the nations and regions that took part in the PIRLS examinations, according to the

analysis (Lin et al., 2021). Particularly in light of how well China is performing in terms of income and growth, the low literacy rates are concerning.

2.2.3.1.2 *United States of America*

The USA is a well-developed country with more education resources than African countries. Low levels of reading proficiency have also been a problem for the United States of America; for six years, USA performance on reading has remained on average performance level whereas there was an increase in other countries (Country Note, 2015). One would certainly think that countries such as the USA would have high literacy rates, but this is not so. This is also proven by the recent data obtained from the National Assessment of Education, which is often called 'the Nation's Report Card' (Nation's Report Card, 2019).

Data obtained from the USA's 'nation`s report card' reveals that only about one-third of Grade 4 public school learners in the USA are proficient in reading (Brangham & Hastings, 2022). That simply shows that primary school learners cannot understand grade-level written text or develop and interpret meaning. Furthermore, in a separate pandemic study of Grade 2 and 3 in 100 school districts, Stanford University researchers found that although teachers had figured out how to teach reading remotely during the 2020-2021 school year, learners did not catch up and their reading skills did not improve (Hargreaves, 2021). In the spring of 2021, learners in each grade scored 3-6 percentile points lower on a commonly used measure of academic progress than they did in 2019, this is according to a national review of the test results of 5.5 million learners (Desilver, 2017).

2.2.3.1.3 *Australia*

Santos, Danielle & Zan, Dirce (2022) state that the system of education used in Australia is considered one of the best in the world. It has high standards and a comprehensive curriculum. Furthermore, the most recent PIRLS demonstrates that, on average, reading proficiency among the assessed young Australian learners increased greatly between 2011 and 2016 (PIRLS, 2016). The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) creates accessible information and statistics about the welfare and health of all

Australians (Barry, 2018). Their findings are that between 2008 and 2018 the proportion of Grade 5 learners who achieved at or above the national minimum in reading and numeracy increased (AIHW, 2022). They also found that reading increased by 4 percentage points, from 91% to 95% (AIHW, 2022). As in South Africa, this institute found out that a number of factors affect successful educational outcomes during the school years, including a child's home environment, such as if books are available at home and if parents read aloud to their children (AIHW, 2022).

2.2.3.2   Reading skills in developing African countries

A saying that reading is a skill is common, it means that one needs to be able to decode words and understand what they are reading. The unfortunate part is that there is still a concern about African children who can't read for understanding, lacking the skill of reading. Speaking at a graduation ceremony which was held in Abuja in 2021, the Nigeria`s former Minister of Education Obiageli Ezekwesili shared her concerns with the attendees of the ceremony about how Africa`s illiteracy rate is of great concern (Obiageli, 2021). She alluded that nine out of ten African children cannot read or learn numbers at the age of ten (Obiageli, 2021).

In this section, the researcher will discuss reading challenges and reading programmes within three developing African countries which are Namibia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

2.2.3.2.1 Namibia

In many developing countries, English is used as the language of instruction. This is the case in Namibia, which uses English as the LoLT (Iipinge & Huddlestone, 2023). A study by Tötemeyer, Kirchner and Alexander and (2015) found that illiteracy in Namibia was caused by a number of factors, such as low reading proficiency in English and in the learners' mother tongue.

These factors (low reading proficiency in English and in the learners' mother tongue) seem to be common in other African countries too (Van Staden & Bosker, 2014). Hautemo and Julius (2016) found that since most learners speak their mother tongue at home,

Namibian learners experience difficulties in learning in English. This challenge is similar to that of South African learners, especially in township schools, where most speak their mother tongue at home and only experience English as the LoLT from Grade 4 onwards. Sibanda (2014) states that the challenges for Grade 3-4 learners related to transitioning are not a cause for concern for South Africa alone, but also internationally.

2.2.3.2.2 Uganda

Reading is also a problem in Uganda, just as it is in other African countries. According to a study conducted by Fontana, Ariapaand Atuheire (2020), reading proficiency in Uganda's refugee and host populations is significantly lower than the country's average. For instance, the Uwezo Annual Learning Assessment data showed that, only 28% of the assessed refugee learners in Grades 3 to 7 could read and comprehend a primary school story, and only 2 out of 10 (21%) refugee learners had attained full competency in literacy (Uwezo, 2018). It has been shown that learning outcomes are equally low for refugee and host community children, where more than 90% are unable to read and comprehend a story (Uwezo, 2018). These results show just how much primary school learners are still struggling with reading skill. Perhaps effective reading programmes could solve such problems.

Children have challenges in reading in their mother tongue as well as in English (Uwezo, 2018). Like Uganda and other African countries, South African children also struggle to read. According to McBride (2019), 8 out 10 children in South Africa cannot read properly, not in English nor in their home language. This shows just how reading skill is a challenge to South Africa and other African countries.

The reading problem in Uganda is mostly experienced by learners in rural areas, rather than their counterparts in urban areas. In urban areas, 56% of learners in primary school Grades 3-7 could read and comprehend a P2-level English text, compared with 35% in rural areas (Uwezo, 2018). With disparities in socio-economic status, it can be assumed that reading for those in the poorer socio-economic classes will find access to quality education difficult and being able to read even more so.

2.2.3.2.3 Zambia

Zambia is also one of the African countries which has reading challenges in their primary schools. The Ministry of Education appointed a team in 2003 which developed a Reading Programme which provided for bilingual literacy development and consolidation in Grades 3-7 (Arden, 2012). The Primary Reading Programme (PRP) was one of the most major, landmark literacy programmes that Zambia has ever known (Chileshe, Mkandawire & Tambulukani, 2018). Kanyika (2004:5) stated that "the aim of PRP was to improve reading and writing skills among the pupils at the lower and middle basic levels in Zambian schools so that they can learn more effectively across the curriculum".

Zambia's aim with the PRP is similar to that of South Africa's PSRIP, which also aims to improve the reading skills of learners in primary schools. Kanyika's (2004) findings also proved that learners in Grade 6 of the pilot schools who started with the programme in Grade 4 performed much better than other learners from other schools which were not doing the programme. Perhaps the PSRIP in South will bring about similar changes to the reading skills of primary school learners.

However, Zambia is still facing challenges in reading, especially in EFAL. The use of English as a second language in the early grades in Zambia contributed greatly to a consistently poor performance in literacy over a period of time (Mukuka, 2021). The concerns about the low literacy levels among school-going children in Zambia led to the introduction of several literacy programmes and initiatives (Mkandawire, 2017). The Primary Reading Programme and Primary Literacy Programme were implemented to help improve literacy levels among early-grade learners in Zambia (Mkandawire, 2017).

2.2.3.2.4 Zimbabwe

According to Howe, Venter and Van Staden (2012), the reading situation in Africa (South Africa and Zimbabwe included) creates a serious educational problem. Mutekwa and Musanga (2013) assert that Zimbabwe also experiences difficulties in reading comprehension in EFAL. The Learning Achievement Tracking (LAT) study carried out in

Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe in 2010 revealed that 95% of the learners in Manicaland primary schools operated below their grade level in English. This clearly indicates how most African countries have challenges with reading as a skill in most primary schools.

The Early Reading Initiative in Zimbabwean primary schools was necessitated by early learning gaps that negatively affected performance at Grade 7 and 8 in Zimbabwe, which are attributed to incompetency in reading by learners inherited from the early grades (Saiden & Raramai, 2018). This will always be the case: if learners cannot read well from the early grades, they will encounter more reading challenges as they enter the Intermediate Phase. The annual examinations pass rates in Zimbabwe have constantly remained low; there is a need to close this gap by strengthening human resources by capacitating infant teachers with effective early reading teaching skills.

South Africa is also developing country in Africa, and as this study is based in South Africa, the next section will discuss the current state of reading in South Africa.

2.3 CURRENT STATE OF READING IN SOUTH AFRICA

To understand the issues of reading, a depth of understanding of the current state of reading in South Africa is required. Intermediate Phase learners have always had challenges when it comes to reading as a skill. Drucker (2012, as cited by Combrinck, Van Staden, & Roux, 2014) reported that pre-PIRLS 2011 results point to continued underperformance by South African learners, with little evidence of improved reading literacy scores, even when administering an easy assessment. The PIRLS is regarded as the global standard for assessing trends in reading achievement from Grade 4. It provides internationally comparative data on how well children read and offers relevant information for improving learning and teaching (Howie, MacLeod, Palane, Roux, Combrinck & Tshele, 2017). It is widely known that South Africa has performed very poorly in internationally administered literacy tests over the last two decades.

Rule and Land (2017) revealed that South Africa performs ineffectively within the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ)

surveys. The SACMEQ is a network of 14 Ministries of Education: Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania (mainland), Tanzania (Zanzibar), Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. SACMEQ aims to assess the conditions of schooling and performance levels of students and educators in the areas of literacy and numeracy (Van der Berg & Gustafsson, 2019).

According to the study that SACMEQ undertook in 2011, some Grade 6 learners were illiterate (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019). This means that these learners have not yet developed basic reading skills, namely pre-reading, emergent reading, basic reading, reading for meaning, and interpretive reading. The current crisis regarding South African learners' poor reading proficiency is well documented in academic papers, government reports and the media (Cekiso, 2017). Furthermore, according to Rule and Land (2017), in most South African primary schools reading is largely understood as an oral performance, rather than reading for meaning or reading to comprehend knowledge.

The researcher has been an EFAL teacher for more than eight years now, and cannot agree more with Rule and Land's (2017) study that most language teachers are usually teachers with more experience who treat reading as an oral performance, rather than as reading for understanding. Further, Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga stated that the department continues to believe that literacy and numeracy are the lifeblood of basic education, when speaking at the UNESCO World Literacy Day when (SAnews.gov.za, 2018). The DBE created the innovative Rural Education Assistants' Programme (REAP) to reduce inequities in basic education (DBE, 2O18). The Minister has stated that the REAP uses Education Assistants in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases (Grades 1-4) to improve the quality of education, particularly literacy and reading skills, in rural schools (SAnews.gov.za, 2018). From this, we see an acknowledgment from the DBE about the current challenges in reading which are currently affecting the country.

Concurrently, the DoE is therefore trying hard to find ways to deal with the problem. The national reading strategy for reading is part of its response. In developing this national strategy for reading, South Africa is participating in several United Nations development campaigns.

This has prompted me to explore how the PSRIP will help primary school learners, especially those in Grade 6, to read well and teachers to be able to teach reading as a skill. The poor state of reading in South Africa prompts a closer look into the reading challenges faced in South African schools.

2.4 THE CHALLENGES OF READING IN SOUTH AFRICAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

As the previous section revealed, reading in South African schools is a cause for concern. This section discusses the challenges of reading which most researchers have found to be common in primary schools. Hugo and Horn (2013) confirm that many young learners in South Africa have reading problems, and there has long been a misunderstanding about the role of the teacher in teaching reading. Lack of reading support techniques was identified by the National Reading Strategy campaign as an extrinsic factor that may also contribute to students' poor reading performance as early as 2008 (DBE, 2008). Also, research shows that almost every 10 learners in South Africa cannot read adequately (PIRLS, 2016). Bharuthram (2012) argues that students' poor reading skills have serious consequences for a number of reasons, including how it affects their performance and self-esteem, how it makes it difficult for them to follow written instructions (whether in the form of essay questions or exam instructions), and how it makes it difficult for them to model their own learning. Foncha and Sivasubramaniam (2015) agree that the inability to read in primary schools is a major problem that affects teaching and learning of learners.

The analysis of large-scale Oral Reading Fluency in English in South Africa was carried out by Draper and Spaull (2015) utilising data from 1,772 Grade 5 learners in rural areas, collected by the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) in 2013. This study discovered that Grade 5 rural learners' oral reading fluency in English was very low: 41% of the sample were considered to be non-readers in English, reading at a rate of less than 40 correct words per minute, or so slowly that they were unable to understand what they were reading; 11% were unable to read a single English word from the passage (Draper & Spaull, 2015). English teachers at primary school level face difficulties in terms of knowledge, abilities, and teaching methods for teaching English reading (Ferris &

Hedgcock, 2018). Reading comprehension and readers' tactics are linked according to Verhoeven and De Jong (2017).

2.5 RESULTS OF READING ASSESSSMENTS

Several Ministries of Education in Southern and Eastern Africa founded SACMEQ in 1995 (Moloi & Strauss, 2005). The aim of SACMEQ is to increase the standard of education in sub-Saharan Africa, track trends in reading proficiency among Grade 6 learners, and give educational planners opportunities to gain the procedural skills they need to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their basic education systems (DBE, 2010; Spaull 2011). According to Spaull (2017), in 2011, SACMEQ III ranked South African school children's reading 4th out of 15 African countries after obtaining poorest 25%.

This came after tests conducted as part of the PIRLS in 2006 and 2011 revealed that South African learners performed poorly, with no statistically significant improvement between those years (Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Drucker, 2017.

Additionally, South Africa carried out its own tests to measure learners' abilities of literacy and numeracy. The DBE implemented the Annual National Assessments (ANA) as a mechanism to track annual progress in learner attainment, toward the 2014 goal of guaranteeing that at least 60% of learners reach acceptable levels in literacy and numeracy (South African Journal of Childhood Education, 2015). According to ANA data, EFAL scores were continuously below 50% throughout the grades (DBE, 2015).

Spaull (2017) further asserts that regardless of which subject or grade is assessed, most South African learners are performing considerably below the curriculum level, and are frequently unable to attain basic numeracy and literacy skills. If learners cannot make sense of what they are reading, they will not be able to engage with what the text is about and what is being taught in class; as a result, they will not feel as if they belong in that class (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, & McLeod Palane, 2017). They are excluded from engaging with every aspect of the curriculum, which from Grade 4 requires both the ability to decode (read) independently and the ability to read for meaning, making connections between passages of text and one's own knowledge (Spaull, 2017).

In trying to solve or address the reading challenges that the country is currently facing, it is also important to look at the factors which affect reading literacy achievements. The next section will therefore discuss these factors.

2.6 POSSIBLE FACTORS WHICH AFFECT READING LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT

The previous section discussed the challenges of reading that primary school learners are facing in South Africa, and this section will discuss possible factors which contribute to those challenges. Factors at learner, classroom, and school level that affect reading literacy achievement have been the topic of many research studies. International comparative studies (Van Staden, 2010; Netten, Droop, & Verhoeven, 2011) have used a variety of predictors and theoretical frameworks to research factors that are best capable of predicting reading literacy achievement, specifically among primary school learners. Lucas (2011) found some of the factors that cause reading challenges to be teachers` incompetence and the poor teaching methodology they use to teach reading in class, which causes learners' poor literacy skills. Sanford (2015) highlights that the key factor that impedes learners' reading ability is their inability to process the individual sounds of letters, which is needed for word recognition.

Another worrying factor that causes poor reading development, according to Duke (2019), is culture. He claims that cultural contexts can be positive, negative or neutral. The negative cultural contexts are mostly the ones that affect learners' reading negatively (Duke, 2019).

Furthermore, Cekiso, Rabelemane, Jadezweni, Mandende, and Dieperink (2022) also highlight that rural learners face severe reading challenges that are unique to their environment. He states that factors such as parents' low level of education, little or no parental support and lack of reading material contribute a great deal to learners' reading challenges (Cekiso et al., 2022). These challenges mostly affect learners at township schools who do EFAL as a subject. Most parents of learners in township schools have a low level of education, which makes it difficult for them to help their children with reading.

It is against this background that numerous studies on the causes of learners' poor reading abilities have been conducted in Africa, the USA and Asia (Rohimah, 2021 and Cekiso et al., 2022). The next section will discuss the PIRLS.

2.7 THE PROGRESS IN INTERNATIONAL READING LITERACY STUDY (PIRLS)

PIRLS is another international assessment which South Africa has participated in. Mullis and Martin (2021) assert that as a follow-up to the 1991 Reading Literacy Study conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), the PIRLS was launched in 2001. The IEA's PIRLS is an international study of reading achievement in Grade 4 (Wagemaker, 2020.

The IEA is further described as an independent international cooperative of national research institutions and government agencies that pioneered international comparative assessments of educational achievement in the 1960s, to gain a deeper understanding of policy effects across countries' different systems of education (Ina & Mullis, 2021).

Ramalepe (2018) argues that in PIRLS 2011, an innovation – the pre-PIRLS was initiated – and this was followed by PIRLS Literacy 2016. He further explains that this has been conducted every five years since 2001 by the IEA National Centre for Education Statistics, and asserts that the PIRLS documents worldwide trends in the reading knowledge of Grade 4 learners, as well as school and teacher practices related to instruction (Ramalepe, 2018).

The report by PIRLS (2016) also asserts that PIRLS is an international assessment and also a research project designed to measure the reading achievement of Grade 4 learners and school and teachers` practices related to reading instruction. PIRLS (2016) was the 4th assessment in the current trend series; however, it was the 3rd study for PIRLS in which South Africa has participated (South African Children's Reading Literacy Achievement Project, 2016). The results of the latest PIRLS in which South Africa participated, in 2021, were released in May 2023. These results revealed very low learners` performance, especially in their ability to read for meaning (DBE, 2023). It can be argued that the study took place while South Africa and other countries were hit by the

COVID-19 pandemic, but these results were not shocking, as the previous PIRLS results also showed that South African learners were not able to read for meaning (Mullis, Von Davier, Foy, Fishbein, Reynolds, & Wry, 2023).

The next section will deliberate on the South African CAPS and its reading prescriptions.

2.8 CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT (CAPS) FOR ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

The CAPS is a single document which contains all the elements and aspects of the subjects which need to be taught at school for different grades (DoE, 2010). In an effort to streamline efficient professional support, the DBE launched CAPS in 2012 (Du Plessis & Marais, 2015). According to Kokela (2017), CAPS is a refined and improved derivative of an earlier strategy that sought to promote equal access to education through multilingualism.

According to the CAPS document, which outlines the national curriculum for basic education, learners should be taught in their home language for the first three years of formal schooling (DoE, 2011). The LoLT then changes to English in most township schools. EFAL is one of the subjects which are listed in the NCS for Grades R–12, and is the subject of interest for this study. EFAL is one of the subjects for which it is clearly explained how it is supposed to be taught in primary schools, and how much time is allocated for it on the timetable.

In her foreword in the CAPS document by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, the First Additional Language is defined as a language utilised for certain communicative purposes in a culture, but which is not a mother tongue; that is, a medium of learning and teaching in education (DBE, 2015). Furthermore, Zano and Phatudi (2019) define a First Additional Language as the language that one can learn formally at school in addition to the home language. It has been established that English will be used as the LoLT from Grade 4 onwards in most primary schools in South Africa (Howie, Venter, & Van Staden, 2012).

By the end of Grade 3, learners must demonstrate a high degree of proficiency in English, because English is the LoLT in the Intermediate Phase. In South Africa, most learners begin using their second language, which is frequently English, as the primary medium of instruction in Grade 4. According to the CAPS document of 2015, the LoLT refers to the language medium in which learning, teaching, and assessment take place.

The First Additional Language curriculum is linked to the acquisition of listening, speaking, reading, watching, writing, and presenting skills, according to the CAPS document (DBE, 2015). This study is concerned with reading and viewing skills, which will be explained further as clearly defined in the CAPS document for Grades 4-6. Reading and Viewing skills are regarded as essential to effective learning across the curriculum (DBE, 2015). These skills are central to successful learning as they also prepare learners to be readers (DBE, 2015). These skills are needed the most during reading lessons in class (DoE, 2011). Negretti and Kuteeva (2011) assert that during reading and viewing activities in class, leaners will be able to recognise how genre and register reflect the purpose, audience and context of texts.

It is also important to understand who the EFAL learners are, which will be elaborated on in the next section.

2.9 ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The EFAL learners referred to in this study are those learners who have a home language other than English. EFAL learners have limited exposure to English, mainly during teaching time at the schools they attend (Phatudi & Zano, 2019). Most of these learners are enrolled in schools where the LoLT is English from Grade 4.

Jordan (2012) posits that EFAL learners are most successful when supported by language that is contextualised (connected to real objects, visuals and actions); they are then able to experience the connection between new English vocabulary and their past experience and are given an opportunity to participate in classroom activities at their individual language levels. Hugo and Horn (2013) agree that most of EFAL learners are not proficient enough in English to achieve success in the Intermediate Phase classroom.

The GLEN World (2018) organisation in the USA defines an English language learner as any student/learner in an English language educational system who is not able to communicate fluently in English. They further state that often English language learners are students whose parents speak a language other than English at home (GLEN World, 2018). These learners need to be exposed to different methods of reading in order to master the skill of reading. The next section will discuss methods and approaches which EFAL teachers can use in their classrooms in teaching the skill of reading. It will discuss how a text-based approach can be used in EFAL classrooms and especially during reading lessons.

2.10 TEACHING METHODS AND APPROACHES TO READING

There are different types of methods of reading which teachers can administer in their classrooms when teaching reading as a skill. Teachers can use a selection of these methods or use the one that works best for them and their learners. To teach learners how to read, teachers have to know different methods of teaching reading and apply them (Caddy, 2015). As a teacher, it is difficult to teach reading skills by using only one method; it is advisable to integrate two or more methods in class to see which one works best for your learners. Applying the correct method of teaching reading can reduce the problem of learners of struggling to read.

The PSRIP has integrated these methods in the material that is supplied to schools to help teachers regarding how they can apply these methods in their classes to enhance the reading skills of their learners. The PSRIP is a reading programme recently introduced by the DBE which aims to assist primary school learners with reading skill (DBE, 2021). This study will explore the significance of this programme for teaching reading and learner performance.

Scholars identify methods of teaching reading as the alphabetic method (also known as bottom-up), whole word method (also known as top-down) and interactive method (which is a combination of both bottom-up and top-down methods of reading). These methods are discussed below.

2.10.1 Alphabetic method (bottom-up)

Spaull and Pretorius (2019) explained that decoding relies on several sub-skills, such as phonemic awareness (identifying each sound in a spoken word) and knowledge of letter sounds. Williams (1998) stated that phonics has the advantage that learners can read words which they have not encountered before by sounding them.

Teaching learners the alphabet is the basic form of teaching learners to read. Alphabets are taught to learners from as early as Grade R. Brown (2014) defined the bottom-up model as using a data-processing device to put linguistic signals (letters morphemes, syllables, words, phrases, and discourse makers) in order. Pardede (2011) points out that through the alphabetic method (bottom-up) of teaching reading, learners are taught to match the letters with sounds in defined sequences (that is, grapheme phoneme correspondence) of letters to form words (blending), phrases and sentences (synthesis). They are also taught to break words into letters (segmenting), which can be called spellings and word analysis.

2.10.2 Whole word method (top-down)

The whole word (top-down) method of teaching reading skills is where learners are taught to read the whole word (Kalanje, 2011). Allington (2002, as cited by Phajane, 2014) asserts that the process requires the teacher to present a flashcard with a word on it or to write the word on the chalkboard accompanied by its illustration or real object. The teacher reads the word and asks the learners to read it after him/her (Phajane, 2014).

In this approach the learners do not recognise that the letters represent sound units, so the entire pattern of letters is taught holistically (Zammit, 2019). The teaching of reading skills is done by showing learners an action or picture and then showing them the word for that action or picture (Suraprajit, 2019). This method is mostly used by Foundation Phase teachers. Furthermore, Roe, Smith and Kolodziej (2018) state that children reading is not about dividing words into components, but about integrating the words into bigger units. This approach is mostly grounded on the constructive theory which suggests that teachers should give learners opportunities to construct knowledge from their society (Huang, 2014).

2.10.3 Interactive method (combination of bottom-up and top-down)

The third method of teaching reading is the interactive method. According to Kalanje (2011) this method is similar to the linguistic method. It is a combination of the alphabetic (bottom-up) and whole word (top-down) methods of teaching reading (Herdiana Nur & Ahmad, 2017). This reading model starts with the bottom-up method then moves to the top-down method: learners begin to recognise the word then attempt to analyse the sentences that are relatively difficult to understand.

The method assumes that skills at all levels are interactively available to process and interpret the text (Anthony, 2018). Hence both top-down and bottom-up skills must be developed, because both contribute directly to the successful comprehension of the text. It is assumed that the method may solve some weaknesses in both the top-down and bottom-up methods of teaching reading (Dechant, 2013). If a learner does not understand what is being read, they will continue with the reading process by using both the bottom-up and top-down reading method in turn, so application of both methods in an integrated manner ensures accuracy and comprehension.

2.10.4 Phonics method

According to Brown (2014) the phonics approach involves developing phonic and phonemic awareness. Salmal (2016) adds that the phonics approach teaches word recognition through learning grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) associations. The learners learn vowels, consonants, and blends, and learn to sound out words by combining sounds and blending them into words (Phajane, 2014). This method employs how learners are basically taught in the Foundation Phase: from Grade R learners are taught letters of alphabets and their sounds.

From there, learners will be taught how to build words from those alphabets and sounds. The PSRIP has employed this method of reading in the Intermediate Phase. There is phonic review in a two-week cycle in the Intermediate Phase timetable to be followed according to the lesson plan. Perhaps this method might make an improvement, as in the past the learners in the Foundation Phase would focus only on letters and sounds.

By associating speech sounds with letters, the learners learn to recognise new and unfamiliar words (NECT, 2016). This is a well-known method and one of the best methods of teaching reading. In this method, children are taught the alphabets first (Phajane, 2014).

2.10.5 Linguistic method

This method uses the whole word approach. The Learning Disabilities Association of America (2010) asserts that a learner is not directly taught the relationship between letters and sounds, but learns them through minimal word differences. This simply means that as the child progresses, words which have irregular spellings are introduced as sight words. Often referred to as the 'look and say' method, this whole word approach focuses on a learner's ability to recognise whole words. This method was introduced by John Dewey (Montessory, 2016).

Rubio (2022) suggests that a teacher should show their learners a word, sound the word and ask them to repeat the whole word. She further asserts that a teacher can use flashcards to teach the children to read (Rubio, 2022). It is better to use flashcards with pictures, because pictures will help the child to understand the meaning of the words. Without pictures this method is not very effective. However, it can be one of the best methods of teaching reading if applied properly.

This method is also known as sight reading. It is based on the concept that when children are exposed to a certain word for a long time, they can eventually sight read the words. Most specialists think that this method can be as effective as other methods of teaching reading.

A study by Fitria, Nasution, Fajarianto and Wardah (2018) suggest that teachers should write just short sentences that represent pictures, so that learners will be able read based on pictures. They further suggested that teachers should first read the sentences aloud and then ask learners to repeat after them (Fitria et al., 2018). When learners repeat what the teacher said, they (teachers) should point and look at each individual word. In this method, learners try to recognise whole words in their written form (Makhmudov, 2021). Teachers should teach this method starting with the known to the unknown; they should

start with familiar words and then move on to short sentences (Solomon, 2016). This method is faster, and it facilitates reading comprehension, and is effective for learning to read high-frequency English vocabulary (READ, 2018)

2.10.6 Reading comprehension support method

Teaching learners how to sound out and decode letters of alphabets is the first step in teaching them to read; however, just because learners can read words doesn't mean that they understand them (Duke, Ward & Pearson, 2021). Furthermore, Tang, Asrifan, Chen, Haedar and Agussalim (2019) assert that the process of understanding text begins before learners can read, when someone reads a picture book to them. They further alluded that learners will listen to the words, look at the pictures in the book, and start associating the words on the page with the words they hear (Tang et al., 2019). The reading comprehension support method will be useful to a language teacher to support his/her learners to understand what they read.

Persons with learning disabilities who need to work on reading comprehension often respond to explicitly taught strategies which aid comprehension, such as skimming, scanning and studying techniques (Spencer, Quinn & Wagner, 2014).

The reading comprehension support method is therefore best to use if teachers have an inclusive classroom. These techniques aid in acquiring the gist, and then focus is turned to the details of the text through use of the cloze procedure (Nikoopour & Bargnil, 2020). The cloze procedure builds on a student's impulse to fill in missing elements and is based on the Gestalt principle of closure (Nikoopour & Bargnil, 2020). With this method, every fifth to eighth word in a passage is randomly removed, and the learner is then required to fill in the missing words. This technique develops reading skills and understanding not only of word meaning but also of the structure of the language itself (Crawford, 2004).

It does not just focus on knowing the effect of top-down and bottom-up methods but focuses on knowing what method is used by the English teacher to improve the reading skills of learners and how that method is used (Breiseth, 2019). Likewise, Fateni, Vahedi and Seyyedrezaie (2014) focused on knowing what method is used by an English teacher and how that method is used by them.

South Africa has adopted an inclusive education policy in order to address barriers to learning in the education system; in cases where a teacher has an inclusive classroom, this method could benefit the learners.

If EFAL teachers can incorporate the above discussed methods in their lessons, finding the best one for their learners, perhaps reading as a skill would not be so problematic in South Africa. One method which can be best for one class may not be best for another class. It is thus important that the EFAL teacher makes use of different methods and applies the best one for their classes (Hasanova, Abduazizov & Khujakulov, 2021).

The DBE has acknowledged the reading crisis that is affecting primary school learners and implemented some programmes and strategies which EFAL educators may apply in their classrooms to better the results of reading as a skill (McLean & Rouault, 2017). The next section will discuss some of these programmes.

2.11 READING PROGRAMMES, CAMPAIGNS AND STRATEGIES

In acknowledgement of the importance of reading, more countries have established reading programmes to encourage reading and promote the development of reading skills by young students (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2010). Some programmes focus on improving the quality of the reading instruction provided by teachers and parents; others attempt to increase the quantity of reading materials available to children (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2010). Numerous types of programmes have been used in South Africa by the DBE to increase learners' reading skills. Some of these campaigns are outlined below.

2.11.1 The National Reading Strategy

The National Reading Strategy was established in 2008 and was used to encourage reading across the curriculum, in order to instil a reading culture among learners and teachers by offering assistance and resources. This was done in the hope of encouraging lifelong readers (DBE, 2008). The vision of the National Reading Strategy is clear: "Every South African learner will be a fluent reader who reads to learn and reads for enjoyment and enrichment" (UNESCO/UNICEF, 2008:8-10). The main goal is to improve the reading competence of learners in the country, including those who experience barriers to learning and those at special schools and youth care centres (UNESCO/UNICEF, 2008).

The programmes at this level focus on the development of critical thinking skills and problem solving, ability to communicate and use language, and also the physical, motor abilities and healthy well-being of children. While this strategy focuses largely on primary school learners, it recognises that learning – especially the development of reading skills – is a lifelong practice that continues into high school and beyond (UNESCO/UNICEF, 2008). Although this programme was implemented with the aim of improving reading in primary schools, it had its failures as some teachers had difficulties in applying the strategy in their classroom. Singh (2011) expressed these challenges when he stated that the teachers' level of confidence in teaching reading and implementing the National Reading Strategy in the Foundation Phase was very low.

Singh's (2011) study revealed that in the absence of workshops and professional development programmes, there was a conflict between teachers' existing knowledge and the requirements of the National Reading Strategy. Mensah, Pillay and Sibaya (2017) conducted a study in the UMkhanyakude District of South Africa and found that experience in years and qualifications had an impact on the teachers' experiences with the National Reading Strategy. The next section will look at another reading campaign which was also believed to improve learners' reading skills in primary schools.

2.11.2 Read to Lead campaign

The Read to Lead campaign was established on 22 July 2015. Minister of Basic Education Mrs Angie Motshekga indicated that the emphasis of the campaign was to improve the reading abilities of all South African children with the main objective to guarantee that all learners were able to demonstrate age-appropriate levels of reading by the year 2019 (DBE, 2016). The DBE views reading as a foundational skill on which all other learning is built, creating the opportunity for access to other career opportunities and for people to take part in the democracy effectively. The Read to Lead campaign was a response to national, regional, and international studies which showed that South African children were not able to read at expected levels and were unable to execute tasks that demonstrated key skills associated with literacy (DBE, 2008).

The DBE aimed to increase the average learner's performance in literacy or language to 75% by the end of the campaign. Grobler (2016) stated that the Grow Learning Company developed an interactive reading solution kit as part of the Read to Lead campaign and partnered with the DBE. She explained that the kits were thoughtfully designed to encourage children to fall in love with reading (Grobler, 2016).

Reading researchers Sullivan and Brown (2015:971-980) found that "Reading for pleasure was more important to children's cognitive development between ages 10 and 16 than their parents' level of education". At the age of 16 the combined effect on children's progress of reading books often, going to the library regularly and reading newspapers was four times greater than the advantage they gained from having a parent with a degree (Sullivan & Brown, 2015). While it is true that the DBE has initiated several

projects to address the literacy crisis, including the Read to Lead campaign (DBE, 2015), the National Reading Remedial Plan, and the Primary Teacher Education Project (DBE, 2013), sadly none of these initiatives were successful on a large scale. The Read to Lead campaign did not really achieve its aim; after 15 years of national campaigns to create a culture of reading, Motshekga noted at a launch of the Drop All and Read campaign within Read to Lead that 'South Africa does not have a reading culture (DBE, 2016). The next section will discuss another reading campaign by the DBE.

2.11.3 FUNda Leader movement

FUNda leaders is a movement which is birthed by Nal'ibali reading campaign which is the biggest campaign in the country that helps children to read in different languages and in English (Khaya, 2017). The movement is further described by Huston (2016) everyday people who have raised hands to help ensure that all South Africa`s children are given a better chance to succeed through the power of stories and reading, in Languages they understand best.

FUNda leaders are generally passionate adults who care about and respect children and want to help them learn and become literate through fun and relaxed interaction with stories. By the end of 2017, the campaign had registered five thousand seven hundred and fifty-two (5752) FUNda leaders across the country (News24, 2019). The Nal`ibali believes in the relevance of having round table discussions with young people, to explore possible ways they can become literacy role models and help to create a nation brimming with children who can read and, more importantly, who read for enjoyment (Cilliers & Bloch, 2018). It is important to take note that many literacy interventions are driven by Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) and are reliant on donor funding to be implemented (National Education Collaboration Trust, 2016). Perhaps the failure or rather the reason why programmes or reading interventions which have been implemented in the past inability to meet their desired outcomes can be traced back to insufficient funds to maintain the programmes. Another thing that needs to be looked at is that education system is one way or another linked to politics, the political party which is in power decides on which Education System to follow, sometimes which disadvantages what worked in the past (Volmink & van der Elst, 2017).

2.11.4 The National Reading Coalition

The National Reading Coalition was established by NECT and the DBE as a comprehensive national response to the reading challenges facing South Africa. The National Reading Coalition is coordinating the development and implementation of a comprehensive national reading improvement strategy (SAnews.gov.za, 2019). A culture of reading was referred to, in that the coalition responds to 'the President of the country's call to inculcate a culture of reading in the country (DBE, 2019a).

NECT is composed of community members, government, civil society and academics within the education field. If the National Reading Coalition draws on the extensive knowledge held within NECT, there is potential for conceptualising new and alternative approaches that may assist in improving reading results within South Africa (NECT, 2016). The Minister of Basic Education stated that the involvement of academics within the education field, such as teachers, and community members such as School Governing Body members, strengthened this initiative and brought about positive results for literacy skills in South Africa (NECT, 2016).

The PSRIP was introduced by Nect, and the next section will discuss this programme, how it works, the material it uses, and it aims and objectives for primary school reading.

2.11.5 The Primary School Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP)

The PSRIP is one of the programmes which attempts to increase the quantity of reading material available to children and which is believed will improve the reading skills of primary school learners (NECT, 2016). The focus of this study is to explore the effectiveness of this programme on improving reading in EFAL Grade 6 classes.

The PSRIP is a structured learning programme developed by the DBE/NECT to ensure a standardised approach to the teaching of EFAL reading (NECT, 2016). As per the PSRIP timetable used in class to teach reading in EFAL, teachers are required to follow the same routine every week. It is essential that teachers follow this routine and do not skip any lessons, because the routine integrates all aspects of language in a logical way (NECT, 2016).

The researcher had been teaching EFAL using the PSRIP for about three years now. Based on training by the EFAL subject advisors from the district office, teachers need to use core methodologies to teach all lessons and teach themes that last for two weeks. The training approach and model used is that the PSRIP interprets the CAPS and provides a systematic and sustainable implementation strategy, consisting of set classroom routines and core methodologies for the components of teaching an additional language (NECT, 2016).

The DBE has trained teachers to understand and put into practice the time allocation, pedagogy and assessment of EFAL according to CAPS (DBE, 2017). For successful implementation of the PSRIP, teachers also need to use specific resources in a routine manner, by preparing them and storing them properly after use. According to the PSRIP, reading is an essential EFAL skill which imust be grasped by all learners (NECT, 2016). The PSRIP is directly aligned with CAPS and reading takes place from Monday to Friday, established as group guided reading, shared reading, and comprehension skill (NECT, 2016).

2.11.5.1 PSRIP strategies and learning and teaching materials

As the newly implemented reading programme, the PSRIP has strategies and teaching and learning materials which are meant to make reading easier for both teachers and learners. Fitaloke (2019) confirms that when the reading resources are not sufficient, the classroom activities are affected, and educators might not be able to give learners more reading activities; thus, teachers mostly use teacher-centred strategies for teaching reading. The PSRIP therefore promotes five effective strategies which aim to improve the reading abilities of primary school learners, especially in the Intermediate Phase.

The following are the five broad strategies of the PSRIP (NECT, 2016:1):
- ❖ "To encourage reading for enjoyment to adults, youth and children.
- ❖ Promote access to books and stories.
- ❖ Encourage indigenous language reading and books.
- ❖ Enhance a coherent book development strategy.

❖ Encourage the importance of books in South Africa for each grade in the Intermediate Phase."

The PSRIP has useful resources, which are given to every school for all EFAL teachers. Teachers are encouraged to make copies of these materials and to laminate others to increase their durability (NECT, 2019). Teaching and learning 'how to read' has been made easy if these materials are used correctly (NECT, 2019). Although COVID-19 had a negative impact on teaching and learning from when it struck the country in 2020, there is still hope on the part of the DBE that correct usage of PSRIP materials will improve reading in primary schools (DBE, 2021). Now that the government has implemented strategies to beat the virus and learners are no longer rotating in coming to school, it is still believed that this programme will produce better results in reading. The following materials are provided:

- **Lessons plan:** With this booklet, teachers no longer need to type and figure out the lesson plans for a week or for the whole year. All the lessons plans are in the plan, and the teacher just needs to prepare their lessons on time and make all the teaching aids available for the learners (NECT, 2016).
- **Planner and tracker**: This includes sample test papers and memoranda for tasks to be written by learners as a form of assessment (NECT, 2016).
- **Worksheet packs**: The worksheet packs differ for the different grades and contain texts for group guided reading. These need to be photocopied so that each learner in the group has his/her own worksheet during group guided reading (NECT, 2016).

Teachers need to prepare their lessons well and organise their teaching aids so that the learners become actively involved in the reading lessons without any hindrances (Emiliasari, 2019). Since the PSRIP is focused on the success of reading lessons in the Intermediate Phase, it follows certain methods which are from the EFAL curriculum. These methods are designed to teach learners how to read, by starting to teach them using phonics.

2.12 TEACHER TRAINING IN READING PROGRAMMES

Effective reading programmes help learners to be the best readers they can be. Teachers need to be trained for the successful implementation of any reading programme. Research shows the importance of this and how quality teacher training can have an impact on children's learning successfully (Evans & Acosta, 2021). There are some concerns regarding the student teachers' own abilities in literacy and academic skills (Akinbote, 2007), with some low-quality teacher candidates being admitted into teacher training programmes (Oritsebemigho, 2014), Christina and Vinogradova (2017) compared three literacy programmes across Rwanda, Senegal, and the Philippines, and found that teacher training methods that integrate oral language activities and enhance language skills improve learning outcomes.

2.13 THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The present study employs Vygotsky's (1978) theory of Zone of proximal development and the concept of scaffolding as the theoretical/conceptual framework. Both theories are concerned with what a learner can achieve with the help of a more knowledgeable other. According to Vygotsky (1978), the concept when a child is helped in learning what he/she didn't know in a classroom is described as Zone of Proximal Development. On the other hand, scaffolding is achieved when teachers assist learners to get to understand a concept. In simple terms, we can say Scaffolding is step ladder which helps learners to reach concept or reading concept that they don't know.

There are parts of `reading` or some texts that learners really need assistance from the teacher or peers who understand more. PSRIP has been designed to assist learners who are struggling with reading. In this case, teachers are used as more knowledgeable others as the have been trained about the programme. The PSRIP aims to strengthen the capacity of Foundation and Intermediate phase teachers to teach learners how to read more effectively (DBE, 2021). Since PSRIP`s main aim is to equip teachers to help learners to become effective readers and also to assist those who are struggling with reading, ZPD and Scaffolding are best suited for this study as they are also theories which are concerned with filling a gap on what a learner can achieve with the help of the teacher.

2.13.1 The zone of proximal development

The zone of proximal development, commonly known as the ZPD, is a theoretical space of understanding which is just above the level of understanding of a given individual (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Mohd and Aznan (2015) assert that the ZPD is a level or skills that are not yet mastered by children and this skill can be achieved with the help and guidance of adults or peers. The individual is mostly a learner in an educational setting. The ZPD has further been described by Vygotsky (1978) as a zone where learning occurs when a child is helped in learning a concept in a classroom (Powell et al., 2009). Often children will learn easiest within this zone when others are involved (Pritchard, 2014).

2.13.2 How the ZPD can be applied in the EFAL classroom

In a classroom this will mean that a child can learn easiest when others such as other learners and the teacher are involved in doing activities such as group guided reading together. When Vygotsky (1978) talked of more a knowledgeable other, he referred to someone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner in respect of a particular task, process, or concept. The implication is that in the educational setting the more knowledgeable other is a teacher, but they include adults who are directly involved in children`s academics, such as parents or members of the School Governing Body (McLeod, 2023). An example could be giving learners a text to read on their own to understand their level of reading, with the teacher providing reading aid or assistance where necessary. The ZPD is all about learning and development, and learning should be targeted at learners' potential development and not at the actual development or at learning things that the learners have been able to do learn independently (Rentauli, 2019).

2.13.3 Learning language through the ZPD

Language is regarded as very important in the learning process that leads to the development of a child's ZPD, as it is the tool used for communication between the child and the more capable other (Rentauli, 2019). This may be the case in the EFAL class, where the teacher will help learners with basic English skills before moving on to more complex aspects.

Murakami (2018) asserts that language helps children to internalise forms of mediation provided by cultural, historical and institutional forces, and that their mental functioning – socio historically situated as any higher mental function – was external, because it was social at some point before becoming internal. In the same way, Vygotsky (1978), who is regarded as the father of the ZPD, also proposed that children's intellectual development is shaped by the acquisition of language, because language makes dialogue possible between children and other members of their community (Mercer & Littleton, 2007).

Academically, Vygotsky's language acquisition theory is clearly categorised by the concepts of the ZPD and 'scaffolding' (De Vries, 2000). Vygotsky's theoretical framework mean that teachers need continous professional development of mentoring, observation/ assessment, scaffolding, individually guided activities, study groups, and involvement in the development process as social mediation as grounded (Shabani, 2016). Teachers are regarded as more knowledgeable others who need to scaffold learners.

2.13.4 Scaffolding

Scaffolding is described as an assisted learning process that supports the ZPD, or getting to the next level of understanding, of each learner from the assistance of teachers, peers or other adults (Vygotsky, 1978). It is a method of adapting teaching based on the individual needs of students in the classroom (Pfister, Moser & Pauli, 2015). Providing immediate guidance if the student shows weakness or mistakes is very effective in the process of building a student's understanding (Wischgoll, Pauli, & Reusser, 2015).

Scaffolding leads learners to better comprehension development (Davidson, 2010). Often learners come across words which they don't know how to pronounce, or rather words which they do not understand. This is where a teacher's guidance will be important, ensuring that his or her behaviour leads learners to an understanding of the unknown words while reading. Reza and Mahmood (2013) show that the sociocultural teaching techniques (teacher and peer scaffolding) results in better reading comprehension for EFAL learners (Reza & Mahmood, 2013). The context is conducive and facilitative for the learners to interact with teachers and peers in terms of scaffolding.

The concept of scaffolding can be used to describe different types of adult guidance, with different purposes, in multiple settings, and across varied time scales (Moschkovish, 2015). Scaffolding involves teachers' behaviour shaping according to the learners' needs; this simplification is not for the task itself but is more related to simplification of the learner's role in the task. Scaffolding can be provided by experts as well as more experienced people around a learner: teachers, parents, and even peers in the same class. However, planned instructional scaffolds are often provided by teachers (Haghparast & Mall-Amiri, 2015).

Scaffolding relates to this study because reading is a skill that can be well achieved by learners with the help of their teachers. As scaffolding is described as assisted learning, this is where the teacher will be helping learners in their class about phonics and letter-words. The researcher chose this theory because in exploring the effectiveness of the PSRIP it will also be important to understand how EFAL teachers assist learners with reading.

2.13.5 How teachers can use scaffolding in their classrooms

Teachers' comments and feedback give learners the desire to take ownership of their learning. Instructional scaffolds are important in language learning, especially in learning reading comprehension (Edwards & Huggins, 2011). In the reading process readers draw on contextual information containing syntactic, semantic and discourse constraints that affect their interpretation of the text (Reza, Reza & Hamed, 2012). Hence, learners need teacher assistance, or instructional scaffolds, to understand and comprehend the message lying behind the reading tasks. Because such texts can be difficult to understand, the teacher should supply the tools needed for understanding, such as reading strategies, and scaffold the reading of these texts, as well as prompting questions from pupils that make these texts personally interesting for them (Reza et al., 2012). The teacher's focus in reading is on understanding, meaning construction and making personal sense.

The learning environment is usually extended by inviting a professional expert into the classroom (for example, a researcher). An inquiry-oriented learning environment is created in which reading is driven by students' questions, making reading personally meaningful (based on interest, motives) and functional (answering learners' questions) (Mulvalli, 2021). Within such environments, students are encouraged to wonder, think and pose questions which are the starting point for searching for texts and drawing information from texts, thus creating a need for students to become engaged in the processes of reading comprehension (Mulvalli, 2021).

Scaffolding provides support and keys for students to tackle tasks and problems with reading comprehension in order to have an active role in building coherent mental representations of scientific processes (Valdebenito & Duran, 2015b). The teacher's support seems particularly important when students have a reduced vocabulary, because their academic and disciplinary language is insufficiently developed, and their repertoire of reading/understanding strategies is limited.

2.13.6 Advantages of using scaffolding in EFAL classrooms

Using Vygotsky's (1978) scaffolding in class has more advantages. Just to mention a few: (1) it stimulates learners` development and their creativity, because learners take part in their own learning, (2) it improves the teaching process, (3) it helps to develop learners' self-concept, and (4) it gives attention and guidance to learners and stimulates learners' reflection. Besides that, the scaffolding learning method has advantages that are not possessed by conventional learning methods (Spycher, 2017:9).

Powell and Kalina (as cited by Anderson & Johnson, 2016) claim that for Vygotsky (1978) internalisation occurs more effectively when there is social interaction; therefore, co-operative groups are a means of attaining this objective. Purdy (2008) asserts that we know from field tests research of Vygotsky's (1978) ideas that English language learners benefit from a social environment where they interact with proficient speakers of English. However, this can make English language learners feel inferior in a class where they are mixed with English proficient learners, and it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that all learners in their class feel free and are able to participate well in a group, despite any cultural differences.

2.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The literature outlined in this study has shown how South Africa still needs to be more involved in coming up with strategies to improve primary school reading. This study is guided by Vygotsky's theory of the ZPD and the concept of scaffolding. Literature on how poorly South African learners are performing in EFAL – especially compared to other

countries – is also discussed. Various reading programmes implemented by the DBE in trying to improve the reading skills of primary school learners are discussed in this chapter. The manner in which EFAL must be taught and the time allocation for teaching each skill in EFAL are explained in the CAPS document. Therefore, the CAPS document, especially regarding reading and viewing skills, is also explained in this chapter. Literature is also provided on the current state of reading in South Africa.

Among other reading programmes which have been discussed in this chapter, the PSRIP has been discussed further as it is the main focus of this study.

The next chapter is the methodology chapter, which will describe in detail the research methods, approaches and design used in this study to collect data.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of the PSRIP in two schools in Gauteng. Not many studies have been undertaken of this programme, which prompted the researcher's interest in researching how this programme is going to benefit the EFAL educators and learners.

This chapter focuses on the methodology which the researcher used in answering the research questions to gain knowledge about how the programme works and how it is going to improve the reading levels of primary school learners, especially those in Grade 6. Rajasekar et al. (2013:5) describe research methodology as "… the steps which researchers are going to take about their work of describing and explaining the phenomena". In this study, this refers to the steps which the researcher is going to take in obtaining data about the PSRIP.

Yin (2017) asserts that a qualitative research methodology is associated with the experiences of people regarding a phenomenon. In this case, this included the experiences of EFAL teachers in two schools who are teaching English using the PSRIP. Green and Thorogood (2018) add that qualitative research aims to answer the 'how', 'why' and 'what' questions about a phenomenon. Realising that there is not much research as yet about the PSRIP, questions that were asked include 'How is the programme aimed at teaching and learning of reading skills in EFAL classrooms in two schools in Gauteng?' and 'How do learners in two schools in Gauteng perform when using the PSRIP programme?'. Qualitative research provides a flexible approach which gives the researcher a chance to react to new, unexpected findings that require further exploration. Therefore, parts of the study design may change while under way, and this being possible is crucial for achieving the full potential of qualitative research.

This chapter also focuses on the research design used by this study to answer the research questions posed. It further discusses how participants were selected, how the information was gathered, and how it was analysed.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The essence of research methodology is to translate a research problem into data for analysis, in order to provide relevant answers to research questions at a minimum cost. Jongbo (2014) pinpoints that if a researcher collects data before thinking through the research design matters, and what information is required to answer the research questions, the conclusions drawn will most likely be weak and unconvincing and potentially fail to attain the research objective. Creswell (2014) considers research designs to be different types of inquiry within these different approaches, which Denzin and Lincoln (2011, cited in Creswell, 2014:12) called "strategies of inquiry". Furthermore, Creswell (2014) regards the development of modern technology as providing a multitude of opportunities for innovative research design and advanced procedures in the social sciences.

This study followed a qualitative case study research design as defined by Yin (2018) as a research strategy that helps us to understand phenomena in real-life situations. In this study, the phenomenon of interest is the effectiveness of the reading programme. This design approach is best suited for this research study as it gave the researcher a detailed understanding about the PSRIP, which is the study area, with teachers as participants, by providing additional information about reading effectiveness. The researcher's case relied on exploring the effectiveness of the PSRIP in EFAL in Grade 6. Data was collected from two schools, which means that this study was a multiple case study. The multiple case study or collective case study is concerned with analysis of a number of cases to probe matters affecting people or their condition and circumstances.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Bertram and Christiansen (2020) claim that studies are informed by different sets of beliefs about what we can possibly know about the world, and also what is important to research and to find out about.

Many theorists have their distinct way of describing what a research paradigm is, but their descriptions are similar in one way or another. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) state that a research paradigm relies on the personal beliefs of the researcher. Perera (2018) adds

that a paradigm is a set of conventional beliefs and agreements held by scientists regarding the way problems should be comprehended and addressed. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2020:24), a paradigm is a particular worldview that informs a research project, directing the researcher to what is acceptable and how the research has to be carried out. While there are more theories which can add to what a paradigm is, it is clearly understood that a research paradigm has to deal with persons' beliefs on how one understands the world. Perera (2018) indicates that there are a number of research paradigms, such as positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, pragmatism and constructivism, also referred to as interpretivism.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) point out post-positivism and interpretivism from the existent paradigms as the two major ones that provide grounds for educational research in respect of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Furthermore, the ontology of the post-positivism paradigm is that of objective reality, which also accepts that there can be different perspectives of this reality (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020:27). Bertram and Christiansen (2020) add that ontology is concerned with reality and how one acts within it and perceives it, while epistemology deals with how we get knowledge.

Post-positivism is criticised by interpretivists as they view how to find out the truth about the world differently. Unlike post-positivism, which does not accept that there can be different perspectives of this reality, in the interpretivism paradigm the goal is to understand how people make sense of their worlds and to make meanings of their particular interactions (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that the basic beliefs that define a particular research paradigm may be summarised by the responses given to three important questions:
>a. The ontological question, that is, what is the form and nature of reality?
>b. The epistemological question, that is, what is the basic belief about knowledge (what can be known)?
>c. The methodological question, that is how can the researcher go about finding out whatever s/he believes can be known?

Methodology relates to how researchers go about obtaining knowledge about the world (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020). The paradigm used in this research is the social constructivist paradigm.

Kanselaar (2002) stated that there are two major strands of the social constructivist perspective: the constructivist perspective and the social-cultural perspective. In social constructivism the emphasis is placed on interaction between the learner and the other people (Pritchard, 2014); in other words, knowledge is constructed through interaction between teacher and learner in a classroom setting. Furthermore, the role of the teacher in the social constructivist approach shifts from the being the sole dispenser of knowledge to being a motivator or a resource person (Peter, Costa, Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). In addition, social constructivists view learning as a social activity that involves sharing and application through the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). The main theorist of this branch of constructivism is Vygotsky (1978), who postulated the notion that it was not possible to separate learning from social context.

In a real world or in a classroom setting, social constructivism happens when the teacher engages groups and individuals in a dialogue and supports the development of understanding (Kapur, 2019). Social constructivism in a class could be demonstrated where the EFAL teacher engages with learners in reading lessons and guiding them on how to read.

There have been five main areas to highlight in an overview of social constructivism, as suggested by Watson (2001:130-132):

❖ "Knowledge is constructed by learners – The learners, students, trainees etc. should construct their own knowledge because that is how the mind works, in the construction of new knowledge and information, there is involvement of thinking, accepted wisdom and judgment. New ideas and notions cannot be seized without connecting them to the existing conceptions.

❖ Knowledge is experience based – The knowledge that is imparted to the learners by the educators is too theoretical and conceptual; an individual undergoes numerous experiences in his life and acquires knowledge on the basis of those

experiences, when acquiring academic education, individuals, especially adult learners are required to bring their experiences so that they can enrich their understanding and are able to interpret the significance of knowledge which they obtain in school as well as home.

❖ Learning is social – Languages, cultures and other social norms and values have a direct influence upon learning; social, interpersonal interaction, communication with the community members also inculcate learning amongst the individuals. A person learns multiple things and familiarizes himself with diverse areas, objects, and articles by becoming social and in this manner, he also develops a viewpoint that learning is a social activity, it is hard to become aware of diverse areas and subjects by remaining isolated and not being social.

❖ All aspects of the person are connected – From the social constructivist point of view, social interaction of a person is important for the attainment of knowledge, but besides social interaction, attitudes, emotions, values and actions of the person are also relevant. There is a connection between knowledge, pleasure, ethics, aesthetics, the body and the human action.

❖ Learning communities should be inclusive and equitable – The requirement of knowledge, information and awareness into the lives of the individuals, and recognition of the social nature of learning indicate towards inclusiveness and equity in learning."

3.3.1 Applying social constructivism as a paradigm in the classroom

The following points highlight the usage of constructivist principles within the classroom settings (Watson, 2001:140-147).

❖ "Teachers make use of constructivist principles to promote and accept student self-sufficiency and inventiveness; the students are encouraged to become more resourceful through the use of constructivist principles.

- ❖ Constructivist teachers make use of raw data, and prime sources, along with scheming, interactive and substantial materials.
- ❖ In the structuring of assignments and duties, teachers of the constructivist viewpoint make use of cognitive terminology.
- ❖ Constructivist teachers permit the responses of the students to constrain lesson plans, shift instructional strategies and modify content.
- ❖ Constructivist teachers enquire about the understanding of the concepts by the students before imparting them more information about the concepts.
- ❖ Constructivist teachers encourage students to work in teams, get involved in group discussions and dialogues with both the teachers as well as with each other.
- ❖ Constructivist teachers encourage speaking and verbal communication on the part of the students asking thoughtful, and open-ended questions and even students are encouraged to raise their difficulties and problems; as in some of the classroom instruction, it happens that students listen to the teachers and take down notes, but the teachers who are of the constructivist point of view always encourage the students to ask questions in order to enhance their learning."

Advancing this assumption, Vygotsky established the concept of inter-functional relations and proposed that knowledge is a product of the interaction of social and mental functions, whereby each individual mentally constructs a world of experience through cognitive processes (Vygotsky, 1978).

The social constructivist paradigm is best suited for this study because it is concerned with the challenges of reading. The social constructivist approach (of Vygotskian theory) views reading not only as decoding, but also as a social interaction in real-life situations.

In an attempt to improve students' poor reading skill all over the world, some educators and researchers, such as Kawabata (2011), call for using the constructivist paradigm in teaching reading to EFAL students. The social constructivist paradigm believes that an individual can extend his/her reading proficiency together with a capable other. Teachers are viewed as more knowledgeable others in the school setting. This type of behaviour – called scaffolding – is where another person helps to include learners beyond the actual

level of their development. During reading, this might take on the forms of peer tutoring and small group discussion.

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

As already alluded to previously, this study will follow a qualitative approach. Creswell (2016) posits that the qualitative approach is conducted in order to understand the environment and settings in which participants in a study address an issue. This study aims to explore the effectiveness of the PSRIP in the Intermediate Phase in the contexts of two primary schools that have learners in Grade 6 doing the PSRIP.

This qualifies this study to be qualitative in nature, as the researcher seeks to understand the challenges of reading and how the programme will meet these challenges. Qualitative approach is also used because it is subjective and it allowed the researcher to understand the opinions of the participants about the programme. Qualitative research approach had more advantages in this study than quantitative approach. The researcher has not been interested in the numbers concerning PSRIP but rather on the effectiveness of PSRIP in schools. It is this reason that qualitative research approach was used other than quantitative approach. The quantitative research approach overlooks the participants`' experiences and perspectives in highly controlled settings (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2013) because there lacks a direct connection between researchers and the participants when collecting data.

According to Basias and Pollalis (2018), a qualitative approach has a number of advantages over other approaches, such as quantitative and mixed methods, in the following ways: a) permitting comprehension of the nature and complexity of the phenomenon being studied, b) promoting research in new areas, c) encouraging the exploration of a phenomenon in its natural environment, and d) promoting in-depth research. In this regard, the qualitative approach was chosen for this study as it has the capability of interpreting and describing phenomena (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Again, as opposed to quantitative research, which Bryman (2012:35) defined as "A research strategy that emphasises quantification in the collection and analysis of data",

qualitative approaches to research are not bound by the limitations of quantitative methods. This means that if responses do not fit the researcher's expectations, there is equally useful qualitative data to add context and perhaps explain something that numbers (quantitative research) alone are unable to reveal (Vaughan, 2021).

Using a qualitative research method has been helpful, as it has provided the researcher with insightful information about the PSRIP from educators. Moreover, Flick (2014:542) claimed that "Qualitative research is interested in analysing subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardised data and analysing texts and images rather than number and statistics." This definition stresses how people make sense of something in the world. Furthermore, Silverman (2010) argues that qualitative research approaches sometimes omit contextual sensitivities and focus more on meanings and experiences. This might leave out important factors such as why things are done in a certain way. The phenomenological approach, for instance, attempts to uncover, interpret and understand the participants' experiences (Wilson, 2014). Similarly, Cumming (2001) focused on the participants' experiences rather than any other imperative issues in the context when he engaged with experienced writing instructors from six countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Japan and Thailand).

3.4.1 Advantages of using a qualitative research approach

Bhandari (2020) denotes that qualitative research has more advantages than disadvantages. The following are some of the advantages he proposed:

- ❖ **Flexibility:** The data collection and analysis process can be adapted as new ideas or patterns emerge, and are not rigidly decided beforehand.
- ❖ **Natural settings:** Data collection occurs in a real-world setting, like at school.
- ❖ **Meaningful insights:** Detailed descriptions of people's experiences, feelings and perceptions can be used in designing, testing or improving systems or products.
- ❖ **Generation of new ideas:** Open-ended responses mean that researchers can uncover novel problems or opportunities that they wouldn't have thought of otherwise (Pritha, 2020). Furthermore, the qualitative research approach produces a thick (detailed) description of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences,

and interprets the meanings of their actions (Denzin, 1989). In terms of language testing, for example, Bachman (1998) showed that qualitative research results provide the relationship of information processing with performance specifically and deeply. Chalhoub-Deville and Deville (2008) also argued that qualitative approaches are employed to achieve deeper insights into issues related to designing, administering, and interpreting language assessment. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) mentioned that qualitative research is an interdisciplinary field that encompasses a wider range of epistemological viewpoints, research methods, and interpretive techniques of understanding human experiences. While the study relied more on the advantages of using the qualitative research method, there are other studies which highlight the disadvantages for using qualitative research.

3.4.2 DISADVANTAGES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Beyond the above advantages, some limitations are obvious. First, Silverman (2010) argues that qualitative research approaches sometimes leave out contextual sensitivities, and focus more on meanings and experiences. Phenomenological approach, for instance, attempts to uncover, interpret and understand the participants' experience (Wilson, 2014; Tuohy et al.,2013). Similarly, Cumming (2001) focused on the participants' experience rather than any other imperative issues in the context. He engaged six countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Japan and Thailand) and experienced writing instructors of these countries in his research. in terms of research method, smaller sample size raises the issue of generalizability to the whole population of the research (Harry & Lipsky, 2014; Thompson, 2011). Having studied the language testing assessment in Hong Kong qualitatively, Lam (2015) admitted that due to the small sample size the study results do not wish to claim wider generalization to other contexts. Finally, the analyses of the cases take a considerable amount of time, and one can generalise the results to the larger population in only a very limited way (Flick, 2011). For example, if a legislator needs to vote an issue, she/he cannot wait for three months for a qualitative study to be administered (Sallee & Flood, 2012). Similarly, in language testing and

assessment research, in order to devise a new policy within a short period of time, the policy makers may demand quantitative research instead of qualitative research.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study followed a case study research design. Yin (2017:23) describes case study research as "An empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g. a case) set within it real-world context – especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." In line with Yin (2009), Denscombe (2021) claims that a case study is used to gain an in-depth understanding of a single case or multiple cases in their real-life contexts. Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery and Sheikh (2011) add that a case study is a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context.

Cases were examined within two schools, qualifying this study as a multiple case study. The researcher gained an in-depth understanding of multiple cases of teachers` experiences of the PSRIP in their real-life context. Multiple cases are like multiple experiments, to which the previously developed theory can be compared and extended to account for the empirical results of the case study (Yin, 2017).

Through using a multiple case study design, a wider exploration of the research question and theoretical evolution enabled the researcher to understand the differences and similarities between the experiences and feelings of teachers from the two schools. When the case studies are compared to each other, the researcher also can provide the literature with important insights from the differences and similar aspects (Vannoni, 2015). Furthermore, it is suggested that case study research is enhanced if existing theories can be integrated into the findings (Harland, 2014). The case study approach allows in-depth, multi-faceted explorations of complex issues in their real-life settings (Crowe et al., 2016).

An advantage of using a case study approach for this research was that multiple methods of data collection were possible, and the design enabled the researcher to be responsive to exploring new areas as they emerged. A multiple case study was selected for this study

because it provides an in-depth understanding of the situation and contextual meaning for those involved (Yin, 2018). Yin (2017) outlined six sources of data for rigorous case study research: (a) documentation, (b) archival records, (c) interviews, (d) direct observations, (e) participant observation, and (f) physical artifacts. In this study, interviews and non-participant observations were used to gather data.

3.6 SAMPLING

This study used purposive sampling, as stated in Chapter One. In purposive sampling, researchers intentionally select participants and sites of use in learning or to understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2016). For this study two schools were sampled with the purpose of understanding the central phenomenon, which is the PSRIP. These two schools are in Johannesburg West in Gauteng. These schools were appropriate for the research study because they are already teaching EFAL using the PSRIP programme.

The participants in this study are EFAL teachers from both primary schools who are teaching Grade 6 and their experiences of teaching EFAL have been considered. Seven participants were selected, who all teach Grade 6 EFAL and are part of the PSRIP, three from one school and four from the other.

3.6.1 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS, PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Based on the research questions, the researcher used interviews and class observations to obtain the data. The semi-structured interviews were guided by the first research question which sought to understand the experiences of the teachers with the Primary School Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP), and the third research question which sought to understand how learners perform on the PSRIP. Lastly, the researcher obtained data from class observations by using the second research question.

The research questions that were answered by the above-mentioned data collection methods are:

❖ What are teachers' experiences of the PSRIP?

❖ How effective is the PSRIP for teaching/improving reading in Grade 6?

❖ How do learners perform on the PSRIP?

Data was obtained by using the two qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews and observations, which answered the three research questions of the study. Figure 1 shows how the data was obtained and which research questions were answered.
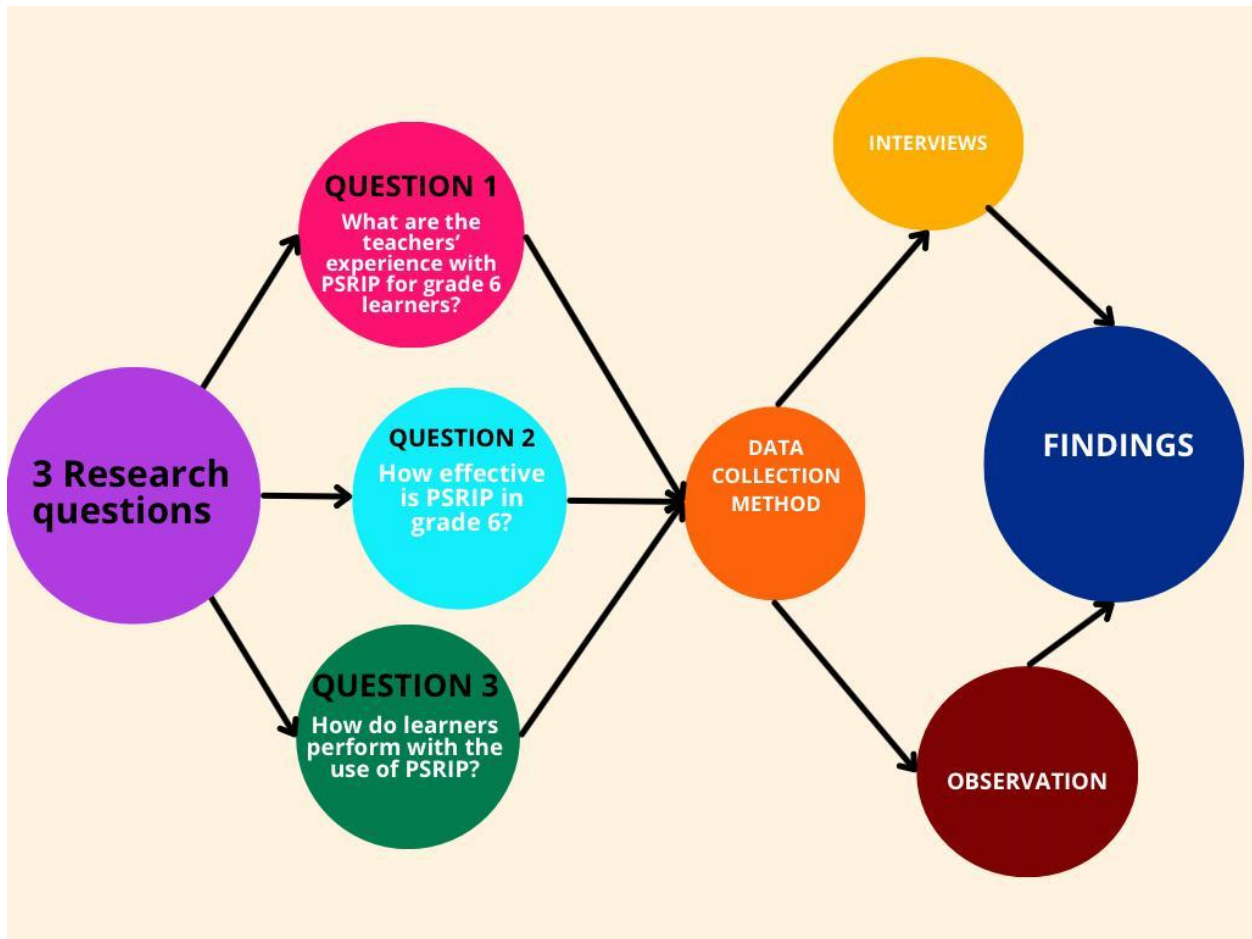
Figure 1. Data-collection process.

3.6.2 Information about the schools

Two case studies of two primary schools formed the basis of the research. Both schools are public schools and they are both situated in Johannesburg West. The two schools teach EFAL using the PSRIP. To ensure confidentiality, the first school is called Aza Primary School and the second is called Max Primary School. Three participants were from Max Primary School and four were from Aza Primary School. Collection and analysis

of data from the two selected primary schools enabled the researcher to compile a database that attempts to provide an understanding of how teachers experience the PSRIP, and if the programme is effective in improving the Grade 6 EFAL learners' literacy skills.

Table 1: The participating schools and sampled teachers

Participating schools	Sampled teachers	No. of sampled teachers per school
Aza Primary School	Mrs Brown, Ms Jay, Mr More, Ms Turner	4
Max Primary School	Mr Rev, Ms Snowy, Mr Leo	3
Total		7

3.6.3 Description of the participants

In this section the researcher provides more information about the seven participants in the study, both in table form and in text.

The participants were chosen based on their experience in the teaching profession, specifically in teaching EFAL. Other aspect which was considered in choosing the participants is that all seven participants are currently teaching EFAL using PSRIP in their respective schools. At least five out of seven participants have also specialized with languages in their studies at university level. Table 2 below provides more information about the participants, with their pseudonyms, designations, the subjects they teach, years of service, and the grades they teach.

Table 2: Information about participants

Pseudo-nyms	Designation	Years of teaching	Grades taught	Subjects taught	Qualific-ations
Mr Rev	Teacher	14	5 and 6	EFAL and Social Sciences	Higher Education Diploma
Ms Snowy	Teacher	8	4, 5 and 6	Life Skills and EFAL	BEd degree
Ms Jay	Teacher	7	4, 5 and 6	Life Skills and EFAL	BEd degree
Mr Leo	Teacher	7	5, 6 and 7	Isizulu, EFAL and Life	BEd degree
Ms Turner	Teacher	8	6 and 7	Sesotho and	BEd
Mrs Brown	Head of Department	19	6 and 7	Life Skills, Life Orientation and EFAL	Primary Teacher`s certificate and Junior primary teacher`s
Mr More	Teacher	10	5, 6 and 7	EFAL and Sesotho	BEd degree and BEd

3.6.3.1 Mr Rev

Mr Rev is a male teacher in the age range of 40‑50 years. Mr Rev studied education and holds a Higher Education Diploma (HEd) from the University of Limpopo. He has been teaching EFAL for eight years this year. He started teaching EFAL in 2016, when he was appointed at Max Primary School, prior to that, Mr Rev was not teaching EFAL. Mr Rev is a Post Level 1 teacher and is teaching at the same school as Mr Leo and Ms Snowy.

3.6.3.2 Ms Snowy

Ms Snowy is a woman in her late twenties who obtained her Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2015. She majored in languages and creative art. She has eight years' teaching experience. Ms Snowy is a Post Level 1 teacher and taught in a private school as a temporary teacher early in 2016, before getting a post at Max Primary. Ms Snowy is currently teaching EFAL to Grades 4, 5 and 6. She also teaches Life Skills to Grades 4 and 5.

3.6.3.3 Mrs Brown

Mrs Brown is a woman between 45 and 55 years of age. She studied teaching at Bonamelo College of Education, where she obtained a Primary Teacher's certificate, whereafter she went to Sebokeng College of Education and obtained a Junior Primary teacher's diploma. In 2014 she started to teach at Aza Primary, and she was promoted to Head of Department (HoD). Mrs Brown is currently teaching EFAL to Grades 6 and 7. She has been teaching English for 19 years. She also teaches Life Orientation in Grade 7 and Life Skills in Grade 6.

3.6.3.4 Ms Jay

Ms Jay is a woman in her early thirties, who graduated from North-West University in 2016 with a BEd degree. She majored in languages and natural science and technology. Ms Jay is qualified to teach in the Intermediate and Senior Phase. She is currently teaching Grades 4, 5 and 6. She has been teaching EFAL since 2017. Other than EFAL, Ms Jay also teaches Life Skills. She has only taught the current school and has just been permanently employed.

3.6.3.5 Mr Leo

Mr Leo is a male teacher in the age range 20–30 years and he obtained his BEd degree from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He has seven years of teaching experience, and is currently teaching EFAL to Grades 5, 6 and 7. Before teaching at Max Primary, Mr Leo was a temporary teacher at another public school in Johannesburg for six months. He is now permanently employed in his current post. Besides EFAL, Mr Leo teaches Isizulu

home language and Life Orientation in Grade 7. Mr Leo is very active in extracurricular activitie and is a sports coordinator at the school.

3.6.3.6 Ms Turner

Ms Turner graduated from UNISA, where she completed her BEd degree in 2015. She is qualified to teach in the Intermediate and Senior Phase and is specialised in all school subjects and educational themes. Ms Turner is in her late thirties. She started teaching EFAL in 2016 and is currently teaching EFAL in Grade 6. She is also teaching Sesotho in Grades 6 and 7. Ms Turner is a library coordinator at Aza Primary, the same school where Mrs Brown, Mr More and Ms Jay teach.

3.6.3.7 Mr More

Mr More is a male teacher in the 40-50 age range. He obtained a BEd degree at the University of Free State in 2012, where he majored in economic and management sciences and creative art. He recently graduated with an Honours degree from UNISA. He has 10 years' teaching experience and has been teaching EFAL from 2014. Mr More is currently teaching Grades 5, 6 and 7. Other than EFAL, Mr More also teaches Sesotho home language.

3.7 INSTRUMENTS AND DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Each of the research approaches involves using one or more data collection methods. The following are some of the qualitative methods which are employed in this study:

- **Observations:** recording what you have seen, heard, or encountered in detailed field notes.
- **Semi-structured Interviews:** Personally asking people questions in one-on-one conversations.

These methods were used and the data obtained answered all of the research questions mentioned in Chapter One.

3.7.1 Observations

Observations took place in the classroom to find out how the programme is implemented and how the learners react to it. This tool of observation links with the second research question that asks how learners experience the PSRIP.

Observations are particularly useful to gain insights into a certain setting and actual behaviour, as opposed to reported behaviour or opinions (Patton, 2014). Qualitative observations can be either participant or non-participant in nature (Maree, 2016). In non-participant observations, the observer is "on the outside looking in", in other words, present in but not part of the situation, trying not to influence the setting by their presence (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020).

The researcher was a non-participant as she was there physically to observe learners but was not part of the situation. The researcher did not do any harm to the participants or make learners feel inferior. She was there observing and noting down things in her diary and notepad that she did not want to forget. This is called unstructured observation as she wrote these notes about events that unfolded during the observation.

Creswell (2016) describes observation as a procedure of data collection by gathering open-ended information through observing people and places in the context in which the study is taking place.

Observing chosen EFAL teachers while presenting a reading lesson using the PSRIP has helped the researcher to see how the PSRIP is implemented in classrooms. The researcher compared her observation notes with the teachers' answers in the interviews for data triangulation purposes. Creswell (2016) further describes a non-participant observer as a person who visits the context and makes detailed notes of things that he or she witnesses while not actually getting involved in the activities occurring in the context. Advantages of conducting observations include minimising the distance between the researcher and the researched, the potential discovery of topics that the researcher did not realise were relevant, and gaining deeper insights into the real-world dimensions of the research problem at hand (Maree, 2016).

3.7.2 Semi-structured interviews

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) found semi-structured interviews to be used to gain an in-depth view of participants' opinions about a specific topic. Harrell and Bradley (2015) revealed that semi-structured interviews are beneficial when working with a complex issue, because one is allowed to probe by asking unplanned questions to explore and deepen understanding. Interviews were held with EFAL educators from both primary schools. The interviews consisted of semi-structured questions which helped participants to elaborate on a question that was asked, without being restricted. This also allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions on certain responses in order to get more clarity. The semi-structured interviews allowed for probing in this regard. Face-to-face interviews were held with educators to answer questions about changes that the PSRIP has brought on teaching reading, and how PSRIP materials are used to enhance the reading skills of learners. These questions were used to gain a detailed picture of teachers' opinions about the PSRIP.

3.7.3 Weaknesses of interviews and observations

While the researcher focussed more on advantages of using interviews and observations as data collecting tools, there could be weaknesses for these two data collecting tools. Observer bias in observations and social desirability bias in interviews could affect the validity. Observer bias in observations and social desirability bias in interviews could also affect the validity of the findings. Berg (2007) highlights that semi-structured interviews as employed in this study are time consuming as they allowed for probing.

Although the researcher is also an EFAL teacher, she remained as a researcher and non-participant observer. This was done without any bias as the aim was to gain reach data as far as possible.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Researchers need to concentrate on interpreting data in a meaningful, correct and rigorous fashion, while being flexible if the occasion demands. This is especially evident in the data analysis process, where the researcher sorts and codes the data using a system of content analysis that can be changed, and to make categories and then provide a meaningful description of an experience (Turale, 2020).

The researcher used content analysis where she gave codes to the data to form common themes. According to Creswell and Clark (2011), data has been analysed by using the following procedure: code the data, assign labels to the codes, and interrelate the themes that emerge.

In this study, data collected through observations was separated from that collected from the semi-structured interviews. Data collected from the semi-structured interviews was examined in order to identify similarities and dissimilarities (Creswell, 2016). Data collected from the interviews was transcribed as part of the analysis (Berg & Lune, 2012).

3.8.1 Analysed data from the interviews and observations

Data obtained from the interviews and observations was given and analysed in chapter 4. The researcher assigned labels to the codes and interrelated the themes that emerged. Data obtained from the interviews was triangulated with data obtained from the observations. Based on the observed lessons, participants are struggling to present reading lessons as required by PSRIP. Other lessons were seen boring to learners and learners seemed not interested in the lesson because they were less engaged. With other observed reading lessons, some learners could not even finish reading one sentence without long pauses until the teacher intervenes. From the interviews with participants, they highlighted the fact that there are some learners in their Grade 6 classes who cannot read at all.

The researcher used the theory of the Zone Of Proximal Development and the concept of scaffolding as well as relevant literature to analyse the data, in order to evaluate if

learners are able to improve their reading skills with the help of the teacher and peers as more knowledgeable others, using the PSRIP.

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND VALIDITY

Qualitative researchers focus on dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability as the criteria for ensuring the trustworthiness and rigour of qualitative findings (Connelly, 2016). This study implemented these four elements to assess the trustworthiness of the study and guarantee the consistency and accuracy of the research findings.

3.9.1 Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of the research findings, and the degree to which research processes are verified by allowing someone from outside the research to evaluate the research process (Streubert & Carpenter, 2007). In this study, the researcher invited a peer researcher to critique the data collection tools and transcripts to ensure that they were dependable enough. As indicated by Merriam & Tisdell (2016), dependability alludes to the degree to which research findings can be duplicated with comparative participants in a similar setting. The nature of deductions relies upon the individual development of implications in view of individual experience of the researcher and how skilled they are at gathering data and interpreting them (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013).

3.9.2 Credibility

Credibility is defined as the accuracy of the research findings and conclusions made (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Credibility is a measure of how confident the qualitative researcher is in the truth of the findings of the research study. Credibility establishes whether the research findings drawn from participants' original data are a correct interpretation of the participants' original views (Creswell, 2014:141).

Spending time observing participants (teachers) revealed hidden behavioural patterns, and the researcher wrote notes in a diary and notepad while observing them to ensure integrity of the research findings.

3.9.3 Transferability

According to Teane (2007), the difficulty when it comes to qualitative research is situational uniqueness, which means that the participants in this study may not relate to others elsewhere, which will cause the conclusions of the study not to be transferable. The researcher advocates that transferability is accomplished by providing a detailed, rich description of the settings studied, to provide the reader with adequate data to pass judgement on the relevance of the discoveries to different settings that they know (German, Kalagiros, Kanakakis, Nasser, Stalla-Bourdillon, van der Graaf, & Vanobberghen 2015).

As this is a qualitative study that strives for understanding of particular participants in particular settings, transferability is not of main importance. This study used rich data and descriptions to make it as accurate as possible.

3.9.4 Confirmability

According to Anney (2014), confirmability refers to the fact that findings from the research could be authenticated by other researchers in the field (Anney, 2014). This means that other educational researchers should be able to authenticate the research findings when the study is complete. The researcher has checked and rechecked the data to verify them, and also allowed the participants (teachers) to read the transcripts in order to verify the data as being a true representation of their experiences.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues are of paramount importance, not only in the primary research but also in terms of using secondary data sets, because there are ethical issues relating to fair and unbiased selection of sources and analysis (Farrimond, 2017). In this study data was collected after receiving ethical clearance and permission to conduct it and upon receiving a clearance certificate from UNISA's research ethics approval committee. Consent letters

were sent to ask permission from the DBE, the schools involved and the teachers who were participants in the study.

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, should they wish to do so, and that all information collected will be treated as strictly confidential. Pseudonyms have been used so that neither the principals, teachers and learners, nor the school may be identified. Information received from the participants has been kept safe in secured lockers to prevent anyone from having unauthorised access to it, and to keep it confidential. This information will be disposed of after five years.

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the methodology used in this study. It explained the methods which the researcher followed in obtaining data from the participants, and discussed the research design of qualitative research which was deemed suitable for the study. The chapter also described the research paradigm and how it too was suitable for this study. Data collection techniques such as semi-structured interviews, observations and data analysis were discussed. Since it is important for the researcher to ensure that the data is valid and true, the measures to ensure trustworthiness were discussed.

The next chapter, Chapter Four, presents and discusses the findings which emerged from the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the methods used in this study to collect data. This chapter discusses the findings that emerged from the data, with analysis and discussion thereof. It presents, interprets, and analyses the findings acquired through the interviews and the class observations, with reference to the relevant literature.

The research findings are presented according to the seven participants' responses to the interview questions, which are aligned with the research questions of the study. All participants were asked the same questions to increase the validity and reliability of the study. The interview comprised open-ended questions that allowed for probing. Data obtained from the interviews and from the observations were triangulated.

4.2 THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS

Data obtained from interviews with the participants and class observations was transcribed and it is arranged according to the themes which emerged, which answered the research questions of the study. The interview questions and the themes which emerged are presented below, along with the observations of the researcher from the lessons in EFAL classes. Data obtained from the observations was also transcribed and triangulated with data obtained from the interviews.

4.2.1 Theme One: Reading challenges

This theme is about the reading challenges that teachers come across in their Grade 6 classes. The researcher asked the participants the following interview question: '*What are the challenges that you have been experiencing with reading in your EFAL classes throughout the years?*'. Under this theme, four sub-themes emerged: reading without understanding, learners who are unable to read at all, learners' home background influences how they read, and learners who lack knowledge of phonics.

4.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Reading without understanding.

Some participants suggested that one of the challenges they experience in their Grade 6 classes is that of learners who read without understanding. In other words, they lack comprehension skills. From the interviews, teachers said the following;

> **Mr More:** *The tough, tough problem I have been experiencing is that one of learners who read without understanding, in other words learners who can't comprehend what they read. For example, other learners in my class would be able to read the story but when I ask them questions based on the story, they wouldn't know how to answer. That on its own shows that they just read but they lack comprehension skills. Only few learners can read and be able to answer questions based on the story, I`d say less than 40% can do.*
>
> **Mrs Brown:** *From my teaching experience, I mostly come across learners who read without understanding.*
>
> **Mr Rev:** *Another reading challenge which I experience is that of learners who just read for the sake of reading but are unable to respond to the text they just read. They are unable to answer simple questions like 'What is this story about?'.*

Just like Mr Rev, Mrs Brown and Mr More, Ms Jay also experienced the problem of learners who read without understanding in her Grade 6 classes. It can be assumed from the reiterations of the teacher participants and from what was observed by the researcher, that most learners do lack comprehension skills. It seems that most of them can read, but they fail to understand what they have read. Hence, learners struggle to comprehend what they are reading. As Mr Rev is saying, learners just read for the sake of reading but are unable to response to the text that is read, which shows that they do not understand English. Mr More further stated that about 60% of his learners do not read for understanding. This is a high number, and it indicates that only a few learners from Mr More's class can read for meaning.

Data obtained from observations revealed the following;

Mr Rev: Group 3, please, come near the table with reading worksheets

Learners moved to the teacher`s table having papers.

Mr Rev: *now read the title of the story out loud.*

Learners: *`What is a sense of humour?`*

Mr Rev: *Correct, you are now going to read the story, I need to hear each and everyone`s voice, are you ready?*

Learners: *Yes Sir,*

Mr Rev: *you may start reading.*

Learners were reading reasonably well, except few learners who could be heard and seen not reading with everybody`s pace and they kept their books closely to their faces. Mr Rev kept on correcting learners while they were reading some sentences incorrectly. Learners were told to read the story for the second time. After learners have read the story, Mr Rev told learners that he is going to ask them questions based on the story.

Mr Rev: *Do you understand what`s the story about?*

Learners: *Yes Sir!*

Mr Rev: *Now, you are going to answer the questions orally, if you know the answer, please raise up your hand.*

Mr Rev: *According to the story, what is a sense of humour?*

Only two learners raised their hands. Mr Rev left the ones raising their hands and chose any other learner from the ones who did not raise their hands.

Mr Rev: *Dabi (Pseudonym for the real name of the learner), what is the answer?*

Dabi kept on looking at her work-sheet paper. After some time,

Dabi said: is,,,,,,,

Mr Rev moved to ask another learner the same question and the learner also seemed clueless of what he is being asked. Mr Rev could not even get to the last question because most learners were struggling to answer oral questions from the story. From this class observation, the researcher noticed that although learners could read, it was difficult for them to answer questions from the story. This was clear enough that learners were reading without understanding.

4.2.1.1.1 Sub-theme discussion

Based on the above quotes, it shows that teachers are experiencing the challenge of learners who cannot read for meaning. Observations from this class revealed that even though there are learners who can read, they are struggling with comprehending what they are reading.

This is unfortunate, as being able to read with understanding helps one to achieve more and increases employability. The challenges which these teachers experienced might be valid, as the Report from the Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) III also revealed that 27% of Grade 6 learners in South Africa were illiterate, because they could not read and comprehend a single short message (GLEN World, 2018). Not being able to respond to the text is a clear indication that nothing was learnt from reading that particular text. Furthermore, understanding of reading is an ability to understand meaning and put it together with what the reader already knows (Klingner, Vaughn & Boardman, 2007). From this definition, learners do not understand what they read, as they are unable to understand meaning and put it together with what they already know.

4.2.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Learners who cannot read at all

This sub-theme seeks to understand the challenges that teachers came across in their Grade 6 EFAL classes with learners who cannot read at all. Most participants from both schools showed concern about learners in their Grade 6 classes who cannot read at all:

> **Mr Leo:** *Some of my Grade 6 learners struggle to read even one sentence without pausing or stopping. Although it is not always a higher number, every year I get to have learners who can't read at all.*

> **Ms Snowy:** *One of the most challenges in my grade class which makes me sad is that of learners who cannot read at all, I had about six learners last year and they are four this year. I try to teach them reading using Grade 1 books.*

> **Ms Jay:** *There are so many challenges when it comes to reading. Other learners who do not read for meaning, I also have learners who do not know how to read even the things they have written. The one is a real challenge and I have checked*

their history on their profiles, some of them are learners who are having learning problems and class teachers have filled Support Needs Assessment (SNA) forms for referral purposes. It is just unfortunate that we still have those learners in the school.

Ms Turner: *Over other challenges, nothing hurts me like learners who cannot read at all, every year in my classes there are those learners. One can hold a book and just look at it for a long time without a single word coming out of their mouth.*

Mr More: *Throughout the years, I always come across learners in my Grade 6 classes who cannot read at all, by that I mean they would only know one word in their entire text to read, some would not even know even one word. This is the biggest challenge.*

Mr Rev: *There are so many challenges with reading in my Grade 6 classes, one of them being learners who cannot read at all, even one sentence without stopping.*

During the class observations, the researcher noticed those learners who could not read at all. In one class, one learner was asked to read out loud as the whole class had just read the story. All that learner did was to hide his face with his reading book, and shame was written all over his face. *Mrs Turner* said `*I am going to ask about 5 people to read out loud the story for us before we try to answer the questions*` *She continued `Coffee, can you please read the heading and the first paragraph*`. Coffee, (Pseudonym for the real name of the learner) seemed so confused as if they whole class has not read the story. Mrs Turner went to Coffee`s table trying to assist Coffee with reading the text. From the heading, Coffee could only read the word `learning` without being helped, it became so difficult for him to read `through`.

 Below is the story that was read in class and the learner had to read it out loud;

> **Learning through play**
> **A Soweto teacher does things differently**
>
> The parents of children in the Protea South community in Soweto are excited! Every day after school, Mrs Mbambo, a teacher at Protea South Primary School allows kids into the school hall to spend their afternoons. "At first, it was just about keeping the children busy. Then as we went on, I started to realise that this can be so much more than that", said Mrs Mbambo when interviewed.
>
> There are ten different stations in the hall, each with a different game. These games range from Maths, to language games and there are four to six children at each station at a time. Since the start of the programme, parents and teachers have reported that their children are doing so much better at language and mathematics, thanks to Mrs Mbambo.
>
> By Naledi Moleleki
>
> 1. What does this article give us information about?
> 2. Where do you find out **who** the article is about?
> 3. Where do you find out **what** happened to this person?
> 4. Where do you find out **where** this happened?
> 5. How do we know that this is a newspaper article?

Figure 2: Reading comprehension worksheet

There can be many factors associated with not knowing how to read. Some factors are attributed to a lack of knowledge of phonics, as participants such as Mr Rev stated that he had to start teaching his learners phonics. Another factor could be phonemic awareness, which is the ability to recognise or be aware of every single sound. The knowledge of phonics and phonemic awareness are basic skills of reading which are supposed to be taught to learners as early as in the Foundation Phase. As Ms Jay said, learners with learning difficulties also struggle a lot with reading. In this case learning problems may include learners with dyslexia.

From much of what the participants said, it is clear that in Grade 6 classes there are still learners who cannot read at all. Mr Leo clearly indicated that some of his learners are not able to read even a single sentence without pausing or stopping. Learners who cannot read at all are stressing the teachers. Mr More further explained that the situation is worse in his class, as some learners could only read one word from the entire text. Hence there are several learners who are unable to read at Grade 6 level, which seems to cause anxiety in the teachers. This anxiety causes one to assume that teachers feel responsible

for the learners not being able to read. Even with implementation of the PSRIP, the learners are unable to read. Therefore, it seems that the reading challenges that the learners are experiencing need external support (for example, for dyslexia) before the PSRIP can be effective.

4.2.1.2.1 Sub-theme discussion

Data obtained from observations revealed that in grade six classes, there are still learners who cannot read. This was also confirmed by most participants as they indicated that there are still learners in their Grade 6 classes who do not know how to read at all. Bharuthram (2012) argues that learners' poor reading skills have serious consequences, such as affecting their self-esteem. The shame that was experienced by those learners who could not read at all was clearly seen during class observations, and one could notice how bad those learners felt. Some learners cannot comprehend what they read in English, which forces the teacher to find other means of ensuring that the learners understand. The teacher must then use the density of familiar words or even do code-switching while he/she is supposed to teach. This affects the teacher's work, as he/ she may be behind with curriculum coverage because one concept is taught twice or explained in two languages. This might strain teachers, especially if they have to do this in more than one class. There is a likelihood that if teachers feel strained with learners who cannot read at all, they may focus on learners who are better at reading or who know how to read, so that they are not behind with the curriculum. This would mean that learners who struggle with reading will proceed to the next class with the same problem.

Furthermore, the issues seem deep rooted, as questions arise as to how these learners managed to get to Grade 6 without being able to read. It seems that the education system in South Africa needs to be scrutinised to pinpoint the many flaws that contribute to learners not being able to read at Grade 6 level. South African teachers have few systems that make them account for the academic performance of the learner. Mbiti (2016) asserts that low teacher accountability is a common phenomenon in developing countries.

4.2.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Learners' background influences how they read

Two participants from Aza Primary School and another two from Max Primary School stated that another reason for reading challenges in their classes is their learners' background:

> **Mrs Brown:** *Our learners struggle to read and it is worse because they don't read at home. Reading only happens in class. Through parents' meetings, we discovered that most of our learners' parents cannot read and write.*

> **Mr Rev:** *Most of challenges in my EFAL classes when it comes to reading are mostly learners who struggle to read and write because they come from disintegrated families. Most of my learners do not stay with their biological parents, they stay with grandparents who can't read and write. Reading is not encouraged at home.*

> **Ms Turner:** *Another challenge on reading is highly dependent on our learners' home background. Some learners come from families where parents are not educated. In other words, they are unable to help their children with reading activities.*

> **Mr Leo:** *I think one other challenge with reading in my class is that the only time learners get to do reading is at school. For several times I gave my learners books to read at home and the majority of them came back the following day with books untouched, even if I give them the same book on three consecutive days. It shows parents do not even check learners' books.*

During the observation stage of collecting data, the researcher noticed that most learners in the EFAL classes could be coming from disadvantaged families; some did not wear proper school uniform, with some of them wearing very torn school shoes while others were wearing takkies. When it was time for them to write, some would not be writing and they would tell the teacher that they did not have pens. Other learners' books were not covered.

Most participants have stated that their learners' background plays a role in the fact that they struggle with reading. Ms Turner even stated that some of her learners come from families where parents are illiterate, which means it is difficult for these parents to help their children with reading since they themselves cannot read. Hence, the assumption is

that learners that come from poor socio-economic backgrounds find it more difficult to read. They lack the necessary resources to be encouraged and motivated to read. Parents are also unable to assist them to read. The pressure therefore mounts for the teacher in the classroom, who has to provide all the skills and resources to teach learners to read. Even though the PSRIP is being used for reading, if the holistic environment such as at home is not conducive for learning to read, then the programme may fail to meet its aims.

4.2.1.3.1 Sub-theme discussion

Based on the above quotes, learners' home backgrounds affect how they read at school. It is clear from the excerpts that learners who come from backgrounds where parents are illiterate and also where parents are just not interested in their children's education negatively affects the learners' performance, especially in reading at school. Du Plessis Mestry (2019) revealed that a lack of parental interest in their children's education is one of the barriers to effective education. A lack of parental interest is similar to parental illiteracy, as they both have a negative impact on learners' education. Learners' home background plays a role in how they read. Learners who come from families which read are most likely to also read well at school. The paradigm of social constructivism states that children's interactions with their social environment are important (Vygotsky, 1978). It is unfortunate if children's environment is not conductive for learning, especially for learning to read. The ZPD shows that children can achieve things on their own, but they can achieve more with the assistance of more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978). The role of parents and teachers is important in helping learners to read, as they are regarded as knowing more than the children; a problem then arises when parents are illiterate.

4.2.1.4 Sub-theme 4: Lack of phonics knowledge

This sub-theme addresses the problem of learners who struggle with reading because they do not know phonics. Phonics are the sounds made by the letters of alphabets. All participants mentioned that their learners lack knowledge of phonics:

Ms Jay: *Amongst learners who can't read at all in my class, it came to my attention that almost all of them do not know the sounds. I had to make an alphabet chart and start teaching them sounds.*

Mr Leo: *There are those learners who struggle to read one sentence with focus; they read words trying the first sound of each word, then be those ones who can't even try out those sounds because they do not know the sounds.*

Ms Snowy: *Most of my learners who can't read do not understand phonics, I see this when some of them can't even try out to read one word in a sentence.*

Ms Turner: *Using PSRIP and having to do phonics review with my learners before every reading lesson, I became aware that my learners know letters of the alphabet but never their sounds, which might be another reason why they can't read.*

Mrs Brown and Mr Rev also mentioned challenges with reading being associated with learners who lack knowledge of phonics.

Through class observations, the challenges of reading could be clearly seen, which did not only frustrate the learners but even the teachers. At Max Primary School, while Ms Snowy was presenting a lesson, group 5 struggled to read so many sentences on their own, and she had to give guidance and support throughout the reading of that text. Another challenge observed was that for those learners who struggled with reading, most of them did not understand phonics. For example, if they did not know how to read a certain word and the teacher tries to guide them step by step with reading that word, they would not even try to sound the first letter of that word. Group 5 was reading the following story. *Ms Snowy said `learners, you are going to read the story for and not for the whole class. I need to hear each and everyone`s voice`.* Group said started reading the story. All the voice could be heard until they got the second sentence. Some of group 5 members could not read the word `encouraged` from the second sentence. There was a long pause and others could only say `encccc` thereby needing help to finish the word `encourage`.

Figure 3: Reading and Viewing class activity

From the remarks of the participants, it is clear that in both schools teachers are having problems with learners who do not know sounds. Phonics are taught as early as when children enter Grade R. It is quite difficult for children to know how to read if they do not know sounds. Ms Snowy realised that her learners do not know or understand phonics; they cannot try to read one word in a sentence, because they would not know the first sound or all the sounds that make up that particular word. Ms Jay also took note that

learners who cannot read in her class actually do not know the sounds. This shows how important it is that learners learn sounds, to make it easier for them to know how to read. In the same way, Ms Turner also realised that her learners only know the letters of the alphabet without knowing the sounds they make. This is common, as most children watch the ABC song on the television, which never gives the related sounds. Furthermore, phonics is an added burden on the teachers, as phonics is supposed to be taught at Foundation Phase level. However, with many learners not being able to read in Grade 6, the teachers have to resort to trying to teach them phonics when they may not have been trained to do so. It is interesting to see that Mrs Turner benefits from the PSRIP, since she is able to pinpoint the issue and perhaps get assistance for her learners in this way.

4.2.1.4.1 Sub-theme discussion

From much of what the participants said, it is notable that most learners in their classrooms lack knowledge of phonics. Ms Jay mentioned that she had to start teaching phonics to her learners who did not know how to read at all. Hugo and Wang (2017) state that most EFAL learners have low phonological and phonemic awareness and delayed word recognition development compared to English-speaking children. It is for this reason that EFAL learners need to be clearly taught phonics and how to decode unfamiliar words. Learners' having knowledge of phonics will decrease the number of learners who cannot read at school. Furthermore, Paris, (2019) asserts that the phonics approach teaches word recognition through learning grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) associations. It is clear that knowledge of phonics is the basic form of reading.

4.2.1.5 Theme one summary

The four sub-themes revealed different kinds of reading challenges that teachers are facing in their EFAL classrooms. These reading challenges seem to be frustrating to all of the participants. Their responses indicate that only a few learners in their classrooms can read, while the vast majority cannot. Reading without understanding is a challenge which participants such as Mr More noted that they experience in their EFAL classrooms. Cekiso (2017) alluded to the fact that the current crisis regarding South African learners' poor reading proficiency is well documented in academic papers, government reports and

the media. Recognition and acknowledgement of these challenges birthed reading programmes such as the PSRIP, to try and improve the reading levels of learners.

During the interviews with the teachers, Ms Jay stated that in her class there are some learners who do not know how to read at all, and she therefore had to start teaching them phonics. Williams (1998) indicated that phonics have the advantage that learners can read words they have not come across before by sounding them. Perhaps this is the reason that Ms Jay felt the need to teach her struggling learners phonics before complex sentences.

One other challenge which can be associated with learners not knowing how to read can be the possibility that learners are dyslexic. Reardon and Portilla (2016) assert that teachers' and parents' awareness is necessary to deal with dyslexic learners. This might be a problem in both schools, as Mr Rev and other participants stated that most of their learners' parents cannot read and write. This means that the parents are not be able to assist their children with reading problems or reading activities.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Training and support for teachers on the improvement programme

This theme seeks to understand the training and support that teachers received to ensure effective implementation of the PSRIP. This theme will answer the first research question, which aims to understand the experiences of the teachers regarding the programme. The following research question was asked: '*Were you trained for the PSRIP? If yes, when were you trained?'.*

From this theme, the following sub-themes emerged; lack of support and training of newly appointed teachers on the programme, negative impact caused by teachers who are not trained, the importance of training and support for teachers and teachers who are not trained are not motivated to teach.

4.2.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Lack of support and training of newly appointed teachers on the programme

Of the seven participants that the researcher interviewed, only two had been formally trained in the PSRIP. It is worrying that the other teachers are not trained in it, but they are expected to be effective at work and to produce good readers:

> **Mr More:** *Yes, I got trained for PSRIP in early 2019, if not late 2018. It was a once-off training by the DBE.*

Mrs Brown and Mr Rev also agreed that they were trained on the PSRIP in early 2019.

> **Mr Leo:** *I was not formally trained about PSRIP, my HoD gave me material and showed me basic things.*
>
> **Ms Snowy:** *I haven't been trained for PSRIP, I teach with the material I was given by my HoD.*
>
> **Ms Jay:** *I was not trained for PSRIP; what is worse is the fact that not even anyone from the district comes to do monitoring and support.*

During the class observations, it could be noticed that some teachers were not sure of what they were doing. One participant kept on looking at the book they were holding time and again. It was the PSRIP teachers' guide.

Just like Ms Snowy and Mr Leo, Ms Jay and Ms Turner claimed that they were not trained on the PSRIP. It is noticeable that many teachers were not trained on the PSRIP. This is worrying, as teachers are expected to be competent in delivering the content. As Mr More stated, the PSRIP training which was provided by the DBE only happened once. In Mr Leo's case, he was not formally trained but was just given instructions by the HoD on how to teach EFAL using the PSRIP. Ms Jay raises the issue of the district not offering support to them as a school.

Most participants, especially those from Max Primary School, were not trained on the PSRIP – which has been implemented from as far back as 2019. If factors such as finances are a problem for training to take place, perhaps workshops by the district offices through the subject advisors would be of great help to newly appointed teachers and those who were not trained. Training and workshops would reduce the frustrations which teachers showed at not being able to fully implement the programme.

4.2.2.1.1 Sub-theme discussion

The PSRIP is a reading improvement programme recently implemented by the DBE. It is a fast-paced, high-impact reading programme and support programme, which was

birthed by the SACE (NECT, 2016). Data obtained from the interviews suggest that most teachers have not been trained in the PSRIP. Only a few participants received training. Training and workshops help a person to be competent in what they do and to be flexible. Wulandari and Djoehaeni (2019) argue that training is important in preventing teacher burnout, and it also plays a protective role and improves the psychosocial environment and health of teachers' work life. Furthermore, training increases teachers' engagement, resilience, perception of their teaching value, self-efficacy, and ability to thrive (Zhang, Yin, Chen, Zhang, & Wu, 2019). Appropriate training can mitigate work-related stress among teachers, by furnishing them with the skills, strategies, and resources needed to manage stress, improve efficacy, and increase workplace satisfaction (Bar-On, 2000). Given these benefits of training teachers, it is important that the DBE provides training to teachers, especially if they need the PSRIP to be implemented successfully.

4.2.2.2 Sub-theme two: Negative impact caused by teachers who are not trained

Most participants stated that they were not trained for the PSRIP. They made the reading lessons a teacher-centred activity, and some teachers taught reading in the manner of 'read what I read' rather than checking learners' understanding:

> **Mr Leo:** *No, I was not trained for PSRIP, my HoD gave me PSRIP material and showed me basic things. This is frustrating because I teach every day not being sure of what I do. I don't feel good about this.*
>
> **Ms Snowy:** *I was not trained for PSRIP and this is sad. I am sure that I am not using the programme as I ought to. The programme might be good in helping learners to read, but with us here, we don't experience that goodness, instead it brings a lot of frustration on us teachers and the learners.*
>
> **Ms Jay:** *No, I was not trained for PSRIP. Here at school only one teacher has told us that he has been trained. I think this is the reason why I feel so frustrated about teaching EFAL using the programme. We even asked the principal if it is compulsory to teach EFAL using this programme or if we can just teach EFAL without it. Also, there is no support or monitoring from the district.*

During class observations, the researcher noticed the challenges with those teachers who were not trained in the PSRIP. Their reading lessons were not entertaining to learners, who seemed bored. Learners who mostly struggled with reading could be seen to be frustrated, while the teacher would also be frustrated in trying to help the learners. Every learner had this copy while the teacher was reading the same story from the book. No actions were done by the teacher as she was reading the story. *Ms Jay said `We are going to read an interesting story. Each person must read on the copy infront of you`*. Ms Jay read first, and learners would come after her. While there were learners who were reading and using their pencils to point to where they were reading, other learners were looking outside, others were whispering to each other. Ms hardly ever saw that others were not reading as she was much focussed on the book.
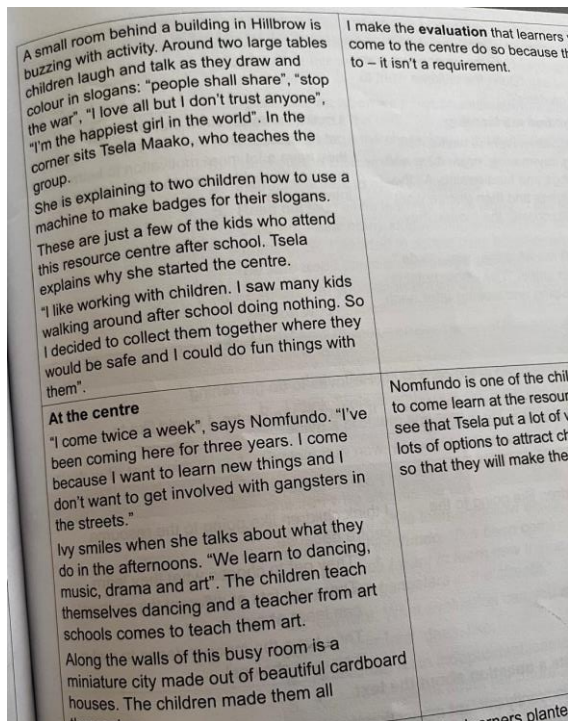

Figure 4: Group-guided reading worksheet

At Max Primary School it seems that other EFAL teachers apart from Mr Rev are not trained in the PSRIP. Ms Turner also stated that she was not trained on the PSRIP, and she just teaches in the best way she can. She even stated that there are things she is not

doing in the way that she should. The problem of teachers who are not trained not only affects the teachers, but also affects the learners. Ms Snowy noted that they are unable to experience the goodness of the programme, as it brings frustrations for the teachers and learners. This frustration is perhaps caused by the fact that they feel that they are doing something that they do not know enough about. In addition, Ms Jay indicated that teachers at Max Primary School do not even receive support from the district about the programme.

4.2.2.1 Sub-theme discussion

From much of what participants have said, it is clear that many teachers were not trained on the PSRIP, and this does not bode well. The fact that teachers mentioned that they are not trained, and that they are not sure if they teach EFAL right using the programme, shows that they require ongoing training. Teachers who are not trained may have a negative impact on the school and on the learners. The school's EFAL results may be low because untrained EFAL teachers are missing out important reading content/ methods to teach the learners. If learners are not making progress in their reading, it affects all areas of their schooling, including motivation.

A study conducted by Siddiqui, Mughal, Soomro, and Dool (2021) revealed that another problem when talking about quality teacher training is the lack of finances in teacher training institutions. It has been found that educational institutions for teacher training frequently lack services (Farah, Fauzee & Daud, 2016). Perhaps this might be the reason why more teachers are not trained in the programme.

Training and development have become the most important factors in the organisational world today, because they increases the efficiency and effectiveness of both employees and the organisation (Raja, Furqan & Khan, 2011). The effectiveness of teachers might not have been noticed in the schools during class observations, because they are not trained. Trained teachers are in a better position to educate the learners; and while this is so, it can be assumed that untrained teachers are the opposite. Training could improve a teacher's knowledge on the subject matter and teaching method. However, teachers in many developing countries, including South Africa, have little or no pre-service

preparation before starting to teach, and may not have opportunities to participate in in-service professional development activities (Hervie & Winful, 2018).

4.2.2.2 Sub-theme 3: The importance of training and support for teachers

Training and support for teachers are necessary to ensure that teachers are doing what they are supposed to do. Training also helps teachers with their personal development and to stay relevant. Looking at some of the trained participants, such as Mrs Brown, there is a level of confidence that comes from her knowing what she is teaching. She also managed to organise a workshop at her school to help teachers who are not trained on the PSRIP:

> **Mrs Brown:** *I got trained for PSRIP in 2019, HoDs had their dates for training which were different from teachers.*
>
> **Mr More:** *I got trained in 2019, it was a once-off training by the department I am glad I got trained because I feel confident in what I do. Also the support from the subject advisor who is also in our WhatsApp group helps.*
>
> **Mr Rev**: *I got trained in 2019. I am the only one at my school currently who received this training. There are a few things I still haven't mastered about the programme, but I am way much better than my colleagues who are not trained.*
>
> **Ms Turner:** *If the school can organise training and some workshop about the programme, I believe we will produce good results as EFAL teachers and we will be productive and competent in teaching and reading.*

Only three of the seven participants in the study have been trained on the PSRIP. All three of them were trained in 2019. Mrs Brown explained that the training for HoDs took place on a different date from the training for teachers. Mr Rev said that he is the only teacher at his school who was trained on the PSRIP. This raises concern as to how the other teachers at school are teaching without being trained, and yet they are expected to be masters of the subject. Mr More explained that when they got trained by the DoE in 2019, that was a once-off training from the DBE. It is clear that since that was a once-off training, the schools have been left with the responsibility of training their educators. Ms

Turner gives an indication that there should be a community of practice in schools where teachers work together to train each other and use the programme effectively.

4.2.2.3.1 Sub-theme discussion

The interviews with the teachers indicated that only three of the participants received training on the PSRIP. Boudersa (2016) asserts that teacher training is very important to meet the advancements in education not only in terms of teaching but also in terms of assessment. According to Walgermo, Frijters and Solheim (2018), teacher training plays an important role in learners' learning achievement. It is for this reason that Ms Turner believes that if her school can organise a training for teachers, they can produce better results in EFAL. It is also clear that teachers who are trained are able to implement the programme better than those who are not. Mr More feels competent because of the knowledge he received during training. This shows just how important training and support for teachers are. Uusiautti and Maatta (2013) argue that in order to make teachers proficient in their content knowledge and equip them with necessary skills or polish their content and pedagogic potential, various teacher training programmes are developed and implemented across the world. If teachers are well trained, they will be proficient in what they do. Teacher training and providing teaching support are seen as an integral component of improved teacher performance (Freeman, Simonsen, Briere & MacSuga-Gage, 2014).

4.2.2.4 Sub-theme 4: Teachers who are not trained are not motivated to teach.

This sub-theme investigates the demotivation that occurs in teachers who are not trained.

> **Ms Snowy:** *The programme might be good in helping learners to read, but with us here, we don't experience that goodness, instead it brings a lot of frustration on us teachers and the learners. I don't look forward to presenting my reading lessons because so much is unknown.*
>
> **Ms Jay:** *It feels heavy going to class every day as a teacher not even understanding what you do. I honestly no longer enjoy my English class. I feel frustrated most times.*

The participants bring up lots of frustrations they experience in teaching EFAL using the PSRIP. We can detect Ms Jay's level of demotivation when she explicitly notes that she does not even enjoy her English classes any more. It also becomes clear from Ms Snowy that she does not look forward to going to her English classes, because much is unknown about the programme.

Mr Leo is also not motivated, as he feels that the PSRIP is not well planned. He brings up another point about preparing for the lessons. It is understood that Mr Leo might not prepare or do planning, as he says it is a struggle to present the lesson daily even when he tried to prepare for it:

> **Mr Leo:** *I find the PSRIP programme frustrating, I am not sure if it is because I was not trained or if the programme is not well planned. It's a struggle to present the lesson daily, even when you tried to prepare.*

During the class observations some participants looked demotivated to deliver the content which they had to present. The researcher could notice teachers who looked stressed and not excited to be in the class.

While having interviews with teachers, Ms Snowy noted how frustrating it is going to class every day not being sure if they are teaching how they are supposed to. Words mentioned by participants such as 'frustrated' and 'sad' show just how demotivated they are to teach using the programme. Ms Jay even mentioned that she feels reluctant to go to class, since she does not understand what to do. Participants feel that the programme is not meeting the desired outcomes. Mr Leo explicitly said that the programme is frustrating. The frustration might due to the fact that teachers are not trained, and they need to figure out how to follow the programme.

4.2.2.4.1 Sub-theme discussion

Teachers are not satisfied with the programme because they are not trained well on it, and they are also not supported. This is where their lack of motivation comes from. The norms and standards policy for educators states the seven roles of a teacher in South Africa, as a learning mediator; interpreter and designer of learning programmes and

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materials; leader, administrator and manager; scholar, researcher and lifelong learner; community, citizenship and pastoral role; assessor; and learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist (DoE, 2000). From these roles it becomes clear that teachers from both schools are not subject specialists, as they do not really understand how the PSRIP has to be implemented.

Teachers' demotivation comes from feeling like they are not masters of the subject matter or subject specialists. It is unlikely that demotivated teachers can produce learners who are motivated to learn. Furthermore, demotivated teachers are seldom concerned about their professional development (Ahmad, Rauf, Rashid, Rehman & Salman, 2013). Hence, teacher trainings become rather useless and ineffective for them.

4.2.2.5 Theme two summary

Trainings and workshops help a person to be competent at what they do and to be flexible. It is important that the DBE provides training to teachers, especially if they need successful implementation of the programme. It is worrying that most participants, especially those from Max Primary School are not trained on the PSRIP, since it has been implemented from as far back as 2019. The challenge of EFAL educators not receiving training is also addressed by Bonnie (2005), who suggests that teachers are not receiving adequate professional development in effective strategies to address the literacy development of learners of English as a second language.

If factors such as finances are a problem in terms of putting training in place, perhaps workshops by the district offices through the subject advisors would be of great help to newly appointed teachers and those who have not been trained. Tshabalala (2014) advances the argument that the quality of teacher training has an impact on teaching methods and improvement of skills. Training and workshops would reduce the frustrations which teachers showed at not being able to fully implement the programme. Since South Africa and other African countries are having challenges with low literacy, it is important that all stakeholders are well trained to ensure the effective implementation of the programme. It was also noticed that teachers who are not trained feel demotivated to deliver the content. Taylor and Cranton (2012) explained teacher motivation as something

that moves an individual to teach, keeps them being teaching proficient, and encourages them to find different and exciting ways to teach the learners. The level of demotivation of teachers who are not trained does not allow them to teach nor to be proficient in teaching.

4.2.3 Theme three: How reading was taught and learnt before the PSRIP and during the PSIRP

This theme seeks to understand the differences that the PSRIP brought about, with a comparison with how reading was done or taught before. Many participants mentioned differences based on reading lesson duration and the learning and teaching support material (LTSM). The interview question that was asked was *'What changes in reading were prescribed by the PSRIP programme?',* with a follow-up question, '*Which reading material did you use before, and which ones are you using now?*', which pertains to sub-theme one.

Sub-themes on the following were derived: material for teaching and learning about how to read, reading lesson duration before the PSRIP and during the PSRIP, and reading skill being taught as a teacher-centred or as a learner-centred approach.

4.2.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Differences in reading learning and teaching support materials (LTSM) differences before and during the PSRIP

During the interviews with teachers it was revealed that there are differences in how reading was done before the PSRIP and how it is done during the PSRIP. One of differences is in the reading material which was used before the PSRIP and that being used with the PSRIP:

> **Mr More:** *Before PSRIP we taught EFAL being guided by the CAPS document only, then we would also use textbooks like platinum. Most textbooks for reading we took from textbooks, DBE Rainbow books for learners. With PSRIP, DBE workbooks are mostly for homework, the PSRIP has materials including reading materials. Other materials are for learners' activities and others are for teachers*.
> **Mrs Brown:** *Before using PSRIP, we used CAPS document on how reading should be taught. CAPS also indicates reading times. With PSRIP, there are about*

four books, a management tool book, a worksheet book, a lesson plan, and tracker. Guidance on how reading should be done is in the management tool book. **Ms Snowy:** *We aren't using the same materials as before, PSRIP has its own teaching and learning material. In PSRIP, there are however references of the textbooks we can refer to for further reading, which are the textbooks we used before.*

From Mrs Brown it is clear that the PSRIP uses different material for reading from that which they used before. Just like Mrs Brown, Ms Snowy also emphasises the fact that the reading material they use now is different from what they used before. From her response we also get the information that teachers have their own material for teaching and learners have their own material for reading and writing with the PSRIP.

Mr Leo also highlighted the fact that the material is not the same, adding that "*Although PSRIP is guided by CAPS, the material we use for reading isn't the same as the one used before; we, however, still use DBE Rainbow workbooks.*" These are the textbooks by the DoE for learner activities from Grade 1 to 6. Mr Leo's response gives an understanding that the PSRIP follows or is still guided by the CAPS document. He still points out differences between the reading material used before the PSRIP and that used with the PSRIP.

During class observations one teacher was reading instructions from a blue PSRIP textbook while giving instructions on which page learners needed to read in their DBE rainbow books. Each learner had his/her own book. In Mr Rev's class, one learner did not have this DBE rainbow book and he told Mr Rev that he forgot it at home.

4.2.3.1.1 Sub-theme discussion
From much of what participants have said, it is quite clear that the reading material which is used with the PSRIP is different from that which they used before. The change of reading material with the PSRIP is an important aspect here, as it is clear that with the PSRIP teachers and learners do not have limited texts to read but have more. This also helps them to give different texts to learners in their classes based on their reading

abilities. Mr Leo also made a clear statement that the PSRIP is guided by CAPS. The participants pointed out that the similarity of reading materials is only in the DBE Rainbow learners' workbooks. Mr Leo stated that they still use the DBE workbooks now and they used them before. It became clear that other than the DBE workbooks, other materials did change. We also come to understand that the PSRIP has teaching material for teachers and learning material for learners. The Gauteng DoE (2012) LTSM policy defines LTSM as all of the materials that facilitate teaching and learning in schools. These materials include the reading material which is used by teachers and that which is used by learners.

4.2.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Reading skill being taught as a teacher-centred or as a learner-centred method

The difference between a teacher-centred and a learner-centred approach is that in the teacher-centred approach learners' focus is on the teacher, whereas in the learner-centred classroom both the teacher and the learners focus on each other equally. In responding to how reading was done before the PSRIP and how is done during the PSRIP, one notable change was revealed in terms of teaching approaches:

> **Ms Snowy:** *Before PSRIP, learners shared textbooks. I needed to read first as a teacher then learners were supposed to follow. With PSRIP, there are different texts for teachers to read for learners and also the text which needs to be read by the learners. Before PSRIP, learners mostly read on their own during assessment only.*

> **Mrs Brown:** *With the past curricula, reading was taught as more of rote learning. We taught reading by reading for our learners, and they would even read the whole text on their own because they memorise the text.*

Ms Snowy's view of how reading was done before is the same as Mrs Brown's. She mentions that they read for learners and learners needed to follow. According to Ms Snowy, the only time when learners had to read alone was when they were being assessed for reading skill.

Mr Rev and Ms Turner had a similar view of how reading was done before the PSRIP:

Mr Rev: *Before PSRIP, we taught learners how to read by actually reading for them. They had to say or read what we read for them. With PSRIP, we start teaching phonics. Learners learn reading mostly from mastering phonics and also through the teachers' assistance. Learners who know how to read well are encouraged to help those who can't, this is called peer-learning.*

Ms Turner: *The teaching of reading is different. Before PSRIP, we mostly read for learners, they had to repeat what we read for them. With PSRIP, learners need to read as a form of baseline assessment, then we group them accordingly It's not always about the teacher reading for learners.*

From what the teachers said, it can be understood that most of the reading was done by the teachers. It is also notable that with the PSRIP, learners gets a chance or time to read on their own. It is understood from Mr Rev that before the PSRIP, teachers were mostly the ones who did the reading, then the learners would read after them. This method does not allow learners to read so that the teacher can easily identify learners who are struggling with reading. It could give the teacher the wrong perspective that his/her learners can read, as they can easily memorise everything that the teacher has read. Ms Snowy also highlighted that while learners used to share reading material in the past, with the PSRIP they are no longer have to face the challenge of sharing textbooks.

4.2.3.2.1 Sub-theme discussion

It became clear from the participants that reading before the implementation of the PSRIP was taught as a teacher-centred approach. Learners were reading what the teacher was reading and ended up memorising the whole text. It is for this reason that Mrs Brown calls it rote learning.

A teacher-centred approach is when the focus in class is on the teacher. This kind of approach considers learners as blank slates, while great emphasis is placed on the teacher. The teacher-centred approach views the teacher as the only one knowing. The learner-centred approach is the opposite of this and has more advantages than the teacher-centred approach, especially when it comes to reading. Advantages include,

among others, shared leadership where the learners take the part in presenting their assignments, writing and reading, and also engage in groups (Walters, 2011). The learners share responsibilities in the class. The learners are actively involved since they work in groups to achieve their goal. Another advantage is that both the teacher and the learners learn together – the teacher is not regarded as the only one knowing. Students need to participate with patterned text and repeated reading whereby they practise the same text until reading is fluent (Katz, 2012).

The way in which teachers mediate reading is important. Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding is a method of teaching that helps learners to understand educational content by working with an educator or someone who has a better understanding of the material (McLeod, 2023). If teachers were trained and understood how to use the programme, it would be easy for them to scaffold the learning. The learners would then be independent learners who can read on their own.

4.2.3.4 Theme three summary

All of the participants mentioned changes through which the PSRIP enhanced reading skill in the classroom. They even started explaining how they taught reading skill before the implementation of the PSRIP. Most participants, such as Mr More and Mrs Brown, talked about changes in the reading material and time allocation for reading. It is clear that reading material is not a problem with teaching reading with the PRSIP, as Ms Snowy stated that most texts for learners are from the DBE workbooks, which each learner in the class has. In a statement made at the Council of Education Ministers workshop, the Minister of Basic Education Mrs Angie Motshekga suggested that the Rainbow books form part of the DBE's range of interventions aimed at improving the performance of South African learners in the first six grades. From this we understand that teaching reading with the current programme allows the LTSM to be enough to avoid hindrances to quality learning. UNESCO (2017) emphasises the possibility that textbooks can have cost-effective inputs for improving learning results. These include resources such as textbooks and the DBE workbooks which are designed to help the teachers and learners in the classroom.

4.2.4 Theme four: Challenges in presenting the reading lesson using the programme

During the interviews with the EFAL teachers they mentioned their challenges with presenting reading lessons using the PSRIP. The following question was asked: '*What are the challenges that you have come across if there are any in presenting reading lesson using PSRIP?'.* The teachers raised many challenges In response to this, the first being about the usage of the PSRIP reading material.

The following sub-themes emerged: the correct material for teaching reading; resources that are needed to present the reading skill; and not preparing enough for the reading lesson causes frustration while presenting.

4.2.4.1 Sub-theme 1: The correct material for teaching reading

Ms Turner and Ms Snowy said that the PSRIP has material (textbooks) which is given to teachers to use in class. It is also notable the responses that although the teachers have material to use to teach, they do not know how to use that material:

> **Ms Turner:** *There are about four books given to me by my HoD to teach PSRIP with. Other reading text such as text for group guided reading are in another textbook, while other texts for shared reading are in lesson plan book. This was a real challenge which forced me to prep daily not weekly, just so I could be sure of what I am going to teach my learners.*

> **Ms Snowy:** *Because I wasn't trained for PSRIP, I am always not sure which material to use first for reading. Sometimes I would realise that I missed out some texts which I was supposed to have done with learners within a particular theme. I am always confused about utilising the textbooks, especially for reading.*

> **Ms Jay:** *My challenge with presenting the reading lesson was the fact that I would concentrate on one book for the entire theme, which is the lesson plan book. I found it difficult to know which textbook is used, so I would present the reading lesson focusing on only one book.*

Ms Snowy highlights another issue, that of missing out on other reading activities because they appear in other textbooks that she hardly ever uses. This might cause problems, as I believe that each text in the book is designed for a particular purpose, and skills which learners get from different texts might not be the same. In contrast, Ms Turner mentions different texts for shared reading and group guided reading. She states that the frustration with regard to reading material forced her to prepare daily instead of weekly. Ms Turner does not allow the problem with reading material to cause more problems. Her attitude towards her challenge seems to be a positive one which will bring positive results. However, Ms Jay alludes to the fact that she focuses more on one material and forgets about the other ones. This is a problem as different texts serve different purposes

4.2.4.1.1 Sub-theme discussion

From much of what participants have said, problems in presenting the reading lesson are not really related to a lack of reading material but rather to how to use the material to present the lesson. A study by Anggaira and Aryanti (2016) revealed that authentic materials are able to influence learners' reading performance and motivation. However, these materials will not be able to influence learners' performance if teachers are unable to use them.

Ms Snowy believes that the lack of knowledge on how to use the reading material in presenting the lesson is due to the fact that she was not trained on the PSRIP. This pinpoints the importance of training and workshopping teachers so that they become experts in what they do. DeMonte (2013) suggests that to improve teacher instruction and enhance classroom performance takes a commitment of time to teacher training.

There are short texts and long texts used in the lessons: both might be used for different skills which learners need to learn. As much as both narrative and informational texts contribute to knowledge building (Biber & Conrad, 2019), it is important for the teacher to know which to use in order to develop a certain skill in learners.

Focusing on one textbook disadvantages the learners and makes them miss out on learning important skills. The overall understanding from this sub-theme is that teachers

do have teaching reading material, but they do not know how to use this material, which leads to learners having problems in the reading lesson.

4.2.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Resources that are needed to present the reading skill

To accommodate all types of learners in a classroom, teachers need to enhance their teaching by making use of appropriate teaching aids. Among other teaching aids available to teach the reading lesson, teachers raised their concerns specifically about theme vocabulary words and matching pictures from the resource pack (one of the PSRIP textbooks), which need to be photocopied and laminated for every theme:

> **Ms More:** *One of the challenges was also on having to photocopy vocabulary words and their matching pictures and laminate them. Because of the load-shedding and also ink for the printer being finished at our school, sometimes I teach learners without having to have photocopied these words. This disadvantages visual learners. But as I said before, for me to be able to do what I do in class, I had to give myself more time in the afternoons after school to prepare enough for upcoming lessons.*

> **Mr Rev:** *The big photocopy machine at our school isn't working. Unfortunately, PSRIP requires lots of things to be photocopied and laminated for lasting purposes. I honestly tried to photocopy text which learners need to read. Other things like pictures which are aligned with things which need to be put on walls, I don't photocopy. Lots of work, especially if one has more than one Grade 6 class to teach.*

Mr More and Mr Rev are having similar challenges with making the copies which are needed for the reading lesson. Mr More's main concern is not that he does not want to make those copies, but the problem of loadshedding and a constant shortage of ink for printers at his school. These problems cause Mr More to teach reading lessons without using these aids. Mr More is aware that not using the teaching aids for reading may negatively affect the visual learners, as they learn best by seeing things.

Mr Rev mentions that the big photocopy machine at his school is not working, which forced him to copy what he felt was important and leave out pictures. This could be

detrimental to learners, as in each class there are diverse learners with different learning needs. Many could be visual learners. Visual learners learn best if the classroom is print-rich and also if they see what they are learning about.

It is sad that participants such as Mr More sometimes teach or present the reading lesson without the copies which are needed by the learners. Reasons such as problems with the photocopy machines at schools and loadshedding are given as why teachers are unable to make copies. Printed material serves as LTSM and should be utilised well to enhance the process of learning and teaching. If schools are not providing teachers with the material or tools which are needed to perform their duties well, some teachers develop a negative attitude, while others try their best even to the extent of working after hours. This is evidenced when Mr Rev stated that making many copies is a lot of work. Also, Mr More decided to give himself more time in the afternoon after school to manage the many copies he needed to make.

4.2.4.2.1 Sub-theme discussion

From the participants' interviews responses it became clear that the PSRIP requires a great deal of material to be photocopied. Photocopies are examples of teaching aids that assist in the process of learning and teaching. Kozikoğlu, (2017) asserts that the success of learning itself is not only assessed by the teacher's teaching method, but needs to be supported by learning methods, teaching aids, and resources. Audiovisual equipment allows for use of all sounds in the formulation of vocal skills, and enables teachers to provide instructional information in the natural language form in the teaching of listening and speaking, which contributes to the development of the learning process (Sartayeva, Kenesbaev, Zhailauova, Uaidullakyzy, Nurzhanova, & Stambekova, 2018).

4.2.4.3 Sub-theme 3: PSRIP lesson presentation challenges

The Department of Education requires teachers to prepare their lessons before teaching them. In some schools, they prepare in phases. There are weekly preparations and daily preparations or plans. This helps teachers to know exactly what they will be teaching their learners each day. It is noticed in the responses from participants that some of them do not give themselves enough time to plan or prepare their work:

Ms Jay: *My other challenge with presenting the reading lesson is that I get confused in the middle of the lesson, as I would try to check with the other PSRIP material if I am still on the right track. Immediately I try to check other material during the lesson, I lose focus and end up being confused. When I focus on the material, learners make noise and the lesson would then be interrupted.*

Mr Rev: *PSRIP needs lots of time to understand and prepare for your lesson. I think the problem starts at the preparation stage. I don't think I plan thoroughly, that is why sometimes I get confused in trying to present the lesson.*

Mr More: *It got tiring for me to make copies for one class only and I had to remove the vocabulary words when moving to my other EFAL class. Sometimes I would teach with the vocabulary words on the wall in one class and find it time wasting to take them to the other class. This would make the other class suffer, and honestly in the second class I wouldn't be as confident in teaching the same skill as I was in the other class. I would sometimes even miss out on other stuff, until I made time in the afternoons to prep and plan, like I told you earlier.*

From what the participants said, it is understood that the PSRIP needs quite some time to prepare before presenting a lesson. Mr Rev is aware that the PSRIP needs time to prepare; he realised that he does not prepare enough, and believes this is the reason why he sometimes gets confused during a lesson. When Mr More realised that the PSRIP needs considerable preparation, he decided to make time for proper preparation of the lesson in the afternoons after work. I believe that preparing a lesson and all the material needed before presenting a lesson helps a teacher to avoid being confused in the middle of the lesson, and it also reduces lots distractions that may arise as a result of not preparing. Having to go back to the resource book time and again while presenting a lesson – as Ms Jay asserts – indicates that the teacher is unprepared, and makes a teacher look as if he/she is not the master of the subject.

This was confirmed during the class observations, with some teachers seen to be teaching by concentrating on the resource book more than having interactions with learners.

4.2.4.3.1 Sub-theme discussion

This sub-theme addressed the second research question, '*What are teachers` experiences of the PSRIP?'.* It also became clear that teachers do not prepare or plan their work. The PSRIP has a lot of work for teachers to do, and as such it would serve a good purpose for the teachers to plan, as most mentioned that sometimes, in the middle of the lesson, they get confused about what they are supposed to be doing. Meador (2019) suggests that lack of preparation and planning for the lesson leads to failure. Failure to plan and prepare for the lesson will mostly affect learners and their marks (Widodo, 2017).

4.2.4.4 Theme four summary

The teacher participants seem to be having problems with presenting the reading lessons. Rule and Land (2017) acknowledge that many South African teachers display poor knowledge in teaching learners how to read. Since teachers are having challenges with presenting the reading lesson, this becomes a disadvantage for the learners, who will not gain the content they need to learn from the correct lesson presentation. In addition, Rule and Land (2017) found that teachers used limited reading strategies to teach reading. While teachers at Aza and Max Primary Schools might not have limited reading strategies to teach reading, they do not know how to implement those strategies as suggested by the PSRIP.

Mr More and Mrs Brown made it clear that the PSRIP needs a lot of preparation to take place before a reading lesson is presented. Mrs Brown pointed out that although there are many reading texts in the LTSM, teachers need to know which one is going to be read on which day and whether copies need to be made. A study by Gerges (2022) suggests that planning expands teachers' options and increases their chances of delivering a successful lesson.

4.2.5 Theme five: Overcoming challenges in presenting a PSRIP reading lesson

In this section the researcher will explore how the participants are overcoming problems they have with presenting the reading lesson in the PSRIP. While some teachers stated that they were still experiencing issues in presenting the reading lesson, few were able to

overcome the challenge. The following interview question was asked: '*How did you overcome the challenges you faced when working with the PSRIP?*'. This was a follow-up question, as the initial question asked about the challenges which the teachers have in presenting a reading lesson. From this theme, the following sub-theme emerged; Dealing with the challenge of inadequate lesson presentation,

4.2.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Dealing with the challenge of inadequate lesson presentation
Teachers mentioned that they overcame some challenges, while they still faced others with regard to presenting a reading lesson:

> **Ms Snowy:** *I can't really say I managed to deal with presenting a lesson. I asked the other teachers from neighbouring schools for us to meet and share information. We have only met once so far, and I hope as time goes by we will figure out everything.*
>
> **Mr More:** *The (PSRIP) WhatsApp group which I mentioned earlier helps a lot, as more knowledgeable others in this group are helping us a lot. Also reading PSRIP material for understanding helps me a lot, because I always know what I am going to do in class.*
>
> **Mrs Brown:** *After the one-day workshop/training we did at our school with EFAL teachers, we also make sure that we hold regular subject meetings where we discuss a lot about challenges with PSRIP and also figure out solutions. New teachers were really struggling, but I believe these meetings help them. We also do our weekly preparations as a phase, not individually.*
>
> **Mr Leo:** *The challenges I have, as I said, are not only with presenting the reading lesson with PSRIP. The whole programme is difficult to implement, and I don't think I overcame this challenge.*

If the challenges that teachers are experiencing cannot be resolved, it will affect learners in a negative way. Ms Jay states that it is going to be a journey to finally get to overcome the challenges. Mrs Brown indicated that there is a level of team work at their school. As the HoD, Mrs Brown took the initiative to workshop with her subordinates so that they got

to understand how the programme works. If teachers are knowledgeable about the subject matter, there is a high chance that they will do well in teaching the class and produce the desired results. With Mr Leo, the problem is not only about presenting the lesson, as he feels that the whole PSRIP is difficult to implement. Mr More, who is from the same school as Mrs Brown, mentions that his challenges are no longer an issue because of the help he gets from the PSRIP WhatsApp group.

Ms Snowy showed collaborative teaching by organising with teachers from neighbouring schools to have meetings where they will share information and ideas. It seems as though more teachers from Max Primary School are not trained on the programme, so they do not really understand the PSRIP.

4.2.5.1.1 Subtheme discussion

From the responses above, it is interesting to note that teachers are making means to really get the programme right, in order to achieve great implementation. It is perhaps for this reason that Ms Snowy is outsourcing and collaborating with people who may know better. What Ms Snowy has started is similar to a Professional Learning Community (PLC). PLCs are communities that provide the setting and necessary support for groups of classroom teachers, school managers and subject advisors to participate collectively and to set up activities that will drive their development (DBE, 2015). Furthermore, the concept of collaborative team teaching takes place when teachers have open access to the world outside of school (Asmara, Anwar & Ribeh, 2016).

Mrs Brown once held a one-day training for the educators about the PSRIP. She further stated that they hold regular subject meetings where they discuss and share ideas and information about the PSRIP. There seems to be team work taking place at Aza Primary School, which is working well for teachers at this school, since when interviewing them it appeared that they are not struggling with the PSRIP as much as teachers from Max Primary School. Their team work spirit was also notable when Mrs Brown stated that they do their weekly plans as phases and not as individuals. Research suggests that components which lead to a positive working relationship often involve communication,

collaboration, mutual respect, and well-defined roles and responsibilities (Brendle, Piazza & Lock, 2017).

Mr More is using social media effectively as his intervention strategy to solve the problems/challenges he had with the PSRIP material and how it works. This shows that Mr More is very devoted to his work and puts extra effort in, trying to overcome the challenges he had with presenting a reading lesson.

4.2.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Adjusting to curriculum changes in combatting reading challenges

This subtheme is aimed at exploring how teachers are adjusting to curriculum changes as a means to overcome their challenges with presenting a reading lesson. It transpired during the face-to-face interviews that one of the challenges which most participants were facing was that of not being able to adapt to changes brought by the PSRIP, because they were used to how the pure CAPS worked.

Some participants did mention that for the success of their lesson they had to adapt to changes:

> **Ms Jay:** *I thought PSRIP would have been stopped by now like other curriculums such as OBE* [outcomes-based education], *which discontinued, and expected that they will say we go back to teaching EFAL with CAPS only. Seeing that it continues and more schools are now implementing it actually made me work hard on my challenges and stop complaining. I now enjoy the songs which we need to do with learners every Tuesday of the second week. Slowly but surely, I am trying to adapt to changes brought by PSRIP in order to overcome my challenges.*

> **Mr More:** *People like comfort by nature. I was comfortable teaching EFAL using CAPS only, because I can say I knew almost everything. The PSRIP came, which meant I had to re-learn some of the things. Some challenges were not that PSRIP is difficult as such, they needed one to do something in order to familiarise oneself with how it works. I am better now with the programme comparing to how I was when it started.*

Mrs Brown: *Since I have been teaching EFAL I have come across quite a number of curriculum changes. To mention a few, there was Curriculum 2005, there was OBE and the latest curriculum one, CAPS. In all the curricula, the manner in which the EFAL needs to be taught isn't the same. There were similarities here and there, but lots needed to be learned which was unknown. So I am adapting to PSRIP so well and work on improving and minimising the challenges.*

Mr Rev: *In my previous school I was not teaching EFAL, I only started teaching EFAL here, and it was with pure CAPS. it's only later in 2019 that we started with PSRIP. There are so many challenges we are facing as a school, and also me as an individual when it comes to PSRIP. I had problems with teaching songs in every theme. I am now having a good strategy on how to do the song. As the time goes by, I see myself being better at some things which I initially struggled with.*

Some teachers, like Ms Jay, thought that the PSRIP would have been discontinued by now, as she feels that the programme is difficult to implement. Ms Jay misinterprets that the PSRIP reading programme is a curriculum. Seeing that it is still continuing and other schools are also implementing it, she is working hard on trying to understand how the programme works. Ms Jay even made a reference to outcomes-based education (OBE), one of the past curricula which was implemented in South Africa, and how because it did not reach the desired outcomes, it had to be discontinued. This shows her confusion.

It is also clear that Mr Rev had not been teaching EFAL until 2019, when he got to his current school. He indicates that although he was trained for PSRIP, there are still things he does not know well, but he is working on his challenges. In contrast, Mrs Brown pointed out that she had been exposed to quite a number of curriculum changes, and she does not have a problem in adapting to all these changes. Mr More states that it is not that the PSRIP is that difficult, it is just that people like their comfort zone by nature. He explains that he was comfortable in teaching EFAL with the CAPS only, but he had to take action and learn how the PSRIP works.

4.2.5.2.1 Subtheme discussion

Whenever the teachers find it hard to deal with the challenges and changes brought by the PSRIP, it is notable in this study that they have a way of overcoming their challenges, so it seems they are adapting to the programme. The PSRIP was implemented between 2019 and 2020, and findings reflect the overall trend in education outcomes resulting from the school closures and disruption in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (NECT, 2021).

Mrs Brown pointed out that she has been exposed to a number of curricula. I believe this is why she seems to be so active and more understanding than other participants about the programme. She mentioned that she is adapting well to the programme. It is clear that adapting to curriculum changes is good and helps one to be competent in one's work. Molapo (2016) discloses that the lack of motivation for implementation a new curriculum by teachers, as well as their poor involvement in the curriculum development process, are among the fundamental causes of failure to implement curriculum. Ms Jay gives another perspective about the PSRIP, having initially had thoughts that it would have been discontinued by now, like other curricula which were implemented and stopped. Perhaps these thoughts were brought up by the fact that she had challenges with implementing the programme. Her realisation that the programme is being implemented in other schools gave her the motivation to adapt to the changes and improve her understanding of the programme.

4.2.5.3 Theme five summary

Most teachers stated that they have not yet overcome the challenges with presenting the reading lesson. We also understand that there are participants who made ways to address the challenges they have, and to work on them. Mrs Brown, being one of the school managers (HoD) went as far as organising training for the EFAL teachers at her school. This seems to be a good strategy and shows that Mrs Brown did not want to excel alone. More schools could adopt this strategy instead of waiting for training/workshops by the DBE, while teachers and learners are suffering. It is also clear that although participants view the programme differently, teachers from Aza Primary School are having less challenges with it than teachers from Max Primary School. No teacher from Max Primary mentioned the PSRIP WhatsApp group. This could mean that they are not

informed about the group, or that they did not find the group useful. NECT (2016) reported that a total of 4805 Intermediate Phase teachers and 2693 School Management Team members in PSRIP schools received training. Considering the large number of schools which are using the programme, the above numbers of teachers who received training are small; therefore, the DBE really needs to put more emphasis on training teachers.

A national report on the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy by Mabuyo (2020) suggests that in the first quarter of 2020, the aim was to upskill 2837 members in the management functions associated with the teaching of reading, and in the third quarter of 2020 to move on to train 1920 Intermediate Phase teachers. This shows that the DBE acknowledges the need to train teachers on the reading programme.

4.2.6 Theme six: Improvement in learners' reading marks

This section aims to explore the improvement in learners' reading marks since the implementation of the PSRIP. The following sub-themes emerged: existing programmes within schools which assist in improving learners' reading marks and changes in learners' reading marks.

4.2.6.1 Existing programmes within schools which assist in improving learners' reading marks

It is noted that participants believe that improvement in learners' reading marks cannot only be attributed to the PSRIP, since there are other programmes which schools engage in. When teachers were asked in the face-to-face interviews whether there had been an improvement in their learners' marks since the implementation of the PSRIP, they responded as follows:

> **Mr More:** *There is improvement on my learners' reading marks, this improvement I believe is not brought entirely by PSRIP. There are other reading programmes here at school which we take part in. These programmes also help our learners in improving their literacy levels. We are engaged in programmes such as Drop All and Read (DAR) and reading champions by the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI).*

> **Mr Rev:** *There is improvement on my learners' reading marks, although it is not a huge one. It is, however, difficult to say if this improvement is mainly because of PSRIP. There are other reading programmes which engages in at certain allocated time. I believe the improvement is brought by all the programmes and the hard work of teachers.*
>
> **Mr Leo:** *There is no improvement on my learners' reading marks. I still see myself having high-performing learners, few of them of course, average learners and also slow learners. I can't really say there is an improvement.*

Ms Jay, Ms Turner, and Ms Snowy suggest that learners' reading marks change every year and they cannot really say that they have improved or not improved because of the PSRIP. Mrs Brown asserts that there is improvement in her learners' reading marks, but like Mr Rev, Mrs Brown stated that the improvement might be brought about by integration of all the reading programmes at the school. Mr Leo brings a perspective that is different from that of Mrs Brown, Mr Rev and Mr More, and asserts that there is no improvement in his learners' reading marks.

4.2.6.1.1 Subtheme discussion

Some participants believe that other reading programmes which schools are engaged in are also helping in improving the learners' reading marks. Participants indicated that their schools do not only depend on the PSRIP but also give time to other programmes, so that their learners' reading marks improve. Mr Rev clearly stated that other reading programmes such as Drop All and Read are allocated time within their school timetable.

For this reason Mr Rev suggests that the improvement in his learners' reading marks is not mainly because of the PSRIP, and gives credit to other programmes as well. Similarly, Mrs Brown is certain that there is improvement in her learners' reading marks, but also believes that the improvement is brought about by the integration of all of the reading programmes that their school is taking part in. Just like Mrs Brown and Mr Rev, Mr More also highlighted the importance of other reading programmes at his school. Like the other two participants, he stated that there is an improvement in his learners' reading marks.

4.2.6.2 Changes in learners' reading marks

Participants such as Mr More noted that there have been changes in their learners' reading marks, while others also noted that their learners' marks change every year, with or without the PSRIP:

> **Ms Jay:** *Learners' reading marks change every year; some years all learners generally do well in their reading, then with other years you find out that learners don't do well and obtain low marks in reading.*

> **Ms Snowy:** *Besides PSRIP, we get to have different learners each year. With a certain group you find out that there more learners who can read than the ones who can't, other years you find the opposite. I believe learners' reading marks are affected by the kind of learners we have each year, hence the changes. It is not easy to say the improvement on learners' reading marks is because of the programme.*

Participants had one voice on this sub-theme: that there were changes in their learners' reading marks, and that the change is there because of all the different programmes at their respective schools. While one would think that the change in learners' reading marks is because of the PSRIP, Ms Jay clearly stated that this change is not mainly due to the PSRIP, as learners' reading marks change every year. In addition, Ms Snowy asserted that they get different learners every year and hence there are changes in the learners' reading marks every year.

4.2.6.2.1 Subtheme discussion

While a few teachers asserted that there is no change in their learners' reading marks, other participants clearly stated that there are changes, although they can't confirm that the changes are brought about by the PSRIP. Participants give credit to other programmes which their schools are taking part in. According to Ms Jay and Ms Snowy, learners' reading marks are not necessarily improving because of the PSRIP; both mention that learners' reading marks change every year, depending on the kind of learners they receive in a particular year. This shows that the participants do not believe that the change in their learners' reading marks is because of the PSRIP. It also shows

that they believe that the type of learners they have in a particular year affects the change in the reading marks.

4.2.6.3 Theme six summary

It is clear that with some participants, there was no improvement in their learners' reading marks. With other participants, there was an improvement in their learners' reading marks, although they believe that this improvement is because of the integration of all the reading programmes that their schools are engaged in. Mr More suggested that other programmes which are supporting reading at his school are also helping in improving the learners' reading marks. One of the programmes which participants talked about is the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI). The DBE (2023) reported that as part of the PYEI, more than 16,000 reading champions were appointed to support school reading practices. These champions are placed in schools and work hand-in-glove with language teachers to help learners with reading. Another programme is Drop All and Read, which Mr More mentioned that they engaged in at his school.

4.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the findings that emerged from the class observations and interviews with teachers about PSRIP. Data was analysed using themes, which were further broken down into sub-themes. Theme one showed that there were many reading challenges that PSRIP was unable to overcome. Theme two revealed that most teachers are not trained in the PSRIP and, together with those who are trained, they do not get enough support from the DBE on implementation of the programme. Theme three showed that there are differences in how reading was taught and learnt before the implementation of the PSRIP. It also became evident that before the PSRIP, reading skill was taught in more of a teacher-centred approach than a learner-centred approach. Moving on to theme four, it became evident that many teachers are facing challenges in presenting the reading lesson using PSRIP. These challenges range from lesson planning to the correct utilisation of teaching material while presenting the lesson. Theme five showed that while there are still teachers who have not yet overcome challenges in presenting the reading lesson with the PSRIP, other teachers gave themselves extra time to understand the

programme better in order to overcome these challenges. Theme six showed that there is no improvement in learners' reading marks which can be entirely attributed to the PSRIP.

The next chapter is the concluding chapter, which will summarise the findings, provide recommendations that emerged from the data and conclude the dissertation.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the data collection process, with a presentation and analysis of the findings. As indicated in Chapter One, the aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the Primary School Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP) for English First Additional Language learners. It took place in two schools situated in Johannesburg West in Gauteng province. The following research questions were asked to provide insight about the PSRIP:

❖ What are teachers' experiences of the PSRIP?

❖ How effective is the PSRIP for reading in Grade 6?

❖ How do learners perform with the use of the PSRIP?

This chapter covers the summary, findings, recommendations, limitations and delimitations, and implications of the study, and the conclusion.

5.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Empirical research was conducted by holding one-on-one interviews with seven participants from two schools, and through classroom observations. Themes were used to answer the three research questions of the study.

5.2.1 Research question one: What are the teachers' experiences of using the PSRIP for Grade 6 learners?

The themes below summarise the findings for this research question: training and support for teachers on the improvement programme, challenges in presenting the reading lesson using the programme, and overcoming challenges with presenting a reading lesson using the PSRIP.

5.2.1.1 Training and support for teachers on the improvement programme

This theme revealed that of the seven participants interviewed, only two are formally trained on the PSRIP. The rest of the participants have not been trained, which makes it difficult for them to fully understand how the programme works. Most participants are not able to implement the programme as it ought to be implemented because of the lack of training, which leaves them with frustrations and uncertainties. Lack of training has a negative impact on the teachers, and they are really not having good experience with the programme. Lack of training has also made teachers prefer teaching EFAL with CAPS only, as they have been trained for CAPS and say that it is easy. It is not easy to understand the PSRIP subject matter and how to deliver content instantly, especially for Novice teachers, but this challenge can be overcome through teacher training (Kussainov, 2021).

According to Boudersa (2016), teacher training is crucial to help the educational growth of educators and their ability to set meaningful assessments. The importance of training teachers has also been acknowledged by the DBE in their stated policy, which gives their aims and objectives as to train all teachers so that they may be able to impart the skills needed for a democratic and healthy society (DBE, 2011). Furthermore, Wulandari and Djoehaeni (2019) argue that training is important in preventing teacher burnout, and it also plays a protective role in and improves the psychosocial environment and health of teachers' work life. Moreover, Ajani (2018) reports that teachers need to improve their skills and knowledge in their fields of knowledge through quality and regular training. Teachers' skills and knowledge will not improve with once-off training.

Payne,(2018) posits that the benefits of continuous training and professional development are also good for effective class management. Ekawati (2017) add that providing professional training for teachers helps them to fully understand the curriculum. This professional training should be continuous and be given to old and new teachers. While experienced teachers can show resistance to curriculum changes, they may be able to adopt new curriculum implementations when they fully understand the aim of the innovation (Bohn, 2014).

5.2.1.2 Challenges in presenting the reading lesson using the programme

This theme revealed that participants are facing challenges in presenting the reading lesson using the programme. Participants claim that challenges are caused by the fact that they are not trained on the PSRIP, and they find it hard to use the material. Participants claimed that not being able to use the material correctly causes them confusion while they are supposed to be presenting the lesson. Still on PSRIP material, participants also noted that there more texts to read for teachers and also for learners, and that these texts are not in the same material, which causes more confusion. Teachers claimed that this confusion makes them miss other texts. A study by Anggaira and Aryanti (2016) revealed that authentic materials are able to influence learners` reading performance and motivation. However, as much as the PSRIP reading material might be authentic, it is of no use if teachers are unable to use it correctly.

5.2.1.3 Overcoming challenges in presenting a reading lesson using the PSRIP

This theme revealed that many teachers have not yet overcome the challenge of presenting the reading lesson using the PSRIP. There are a few teachers, especially from Aza Primary School, who seem to have overcame this challenge as they had internal strategies as a school to overcome it. One of the strategies which teachers from Aza Primary School used was to have training at their school, which their HoD organised for them. This theme also revealed that other teachers managed to overcome challenges in presenting a reading lesson using the PSRIP by collaborating with other schools. Collaboration is important, as it allows teachers to share information, skills and knowledge. Research suggests that components which lead to a positive working relationship often involve communication, collaboration, mutual respect, and well-defined roles and responsibilities (Brendle, Piazza & Lock, 2017). Other participants also stated that they overcame the challenges by familiarising themselves with the PSRIP WhatsApp group within their region. Participants clarified that this WhatsApp group helps because if they experience any challenge with the PSRIP, they simply post a question in group and other members respond with relevant answers.

5.2.2 Research question two: How effective is the PSRIP for reading in Grade 6?

The findings to this research question are summarised under the themes below: reading challenges, and how reading was taught and learned before the PSRIP and during the PSRIP.

5.2.2.1 Reading challenges

Many learners are faced with different types and degrees of challenges in their studies (Adubasim & Nganji, 2017). As observed, the findings in this theme revealed that there are learners in Grade 6 classes who cannot read at all. It is noted that some of these learners have started their schooling at these schools, and while it is not known how they passed to reach Grade 6 while not being able to read, some such learners have been identified. Support needs assessment forms are filled in by teachers, then these learners are kept at their existing schools, while they wait for placement to the relevant schools from the district office.

It was also revealed that most of the learners who cannot read at all in Grade 6 are over the age for the grade they are in. Among the conditions that affect learners in reading, is dyslexia. This is better explained as a specific learning difficulty that mostly affects how learners read and also manifests in poor spelling (Adubasim & Nganji, 2017). Learners with dyslexia may be able to read, but read at a level lower than expected for their age and level of study (Abigail, 2015).

Some learners at the observed schools could not read at all. While there are different reasons for these learners' inability to read, dyslexia could be one challenge that they are facing.

5.2.2.2 How reading was taught and learned before the PSRIP and during the PSRIP

Findings under this theme revealed that there have been changes in how reading was taught and learned before and during when participants used the PSRIP. From the data from the participants, it became clear that reading before implementation of the PSRIP was taught as teacher-centred approach. Learners were not given much time to read on

their own. Most times, learners were required to read after the teacher, by repeating every word that the teacher reads. In other words, reading was taught as rote learning. Some participants asserted that they preferred this method of teaching reading, as they felt that they were in power, and they knew what they were doing, unlike with the PSRIP, where they feel like they are learning together with the learners. One can conclude that before the PSRIP more learners did not really read for understanding, as they would repeat everything the teacher read for them. It is also clear that there was no flexibility. Participants noted that with the PSRIP each learner has his or her own book, and teachers have even more textbooks for reference for their lessons. Before the PSRIP, learners used to share books because there were not enough. It was also revealed that with the PSRIP reading takes place every day, according to its derivations, such as pre-reading; during reading and after reading. Participants also mentioned that there are different texts to read from, depending on the reading skill that the teacher wants to address on a particular day.

The participants alluded to the fact that from the beginning of the year, each learner must read for the teacher, so he/she is able to place them at the correct reading level. While other schools may struggle with having enough LTSM to deliver the content, it is established that at some schools the only instructional material available is chalk (Etesike, 2017), with a struggle to obtain textbooks. This was not the case at the schools where the study took place at, but it was established that teachers struggled to use the LTSM effectively to deliver the content. Despite the fact that teachers are struggling to use PSRIP material, they expressed their satisfaction that, unlike in the past, each learner has his/her own PSRIP material and are no longer sharing textbooks. Learners used to share textbooks in the past, which used to disadvantage them, especially when homework was given. Nelson (2012) concludes that textbooks are useful to teachers because they use them both for planning and for presenting lessons.

From this theme, it is also understood that learners are still using the DBE's Rainbow workbooks for reading, which were used before the PSRIP. The provision of DBE-sponsored Rainbow workbooks has helped, because learners no longer have to copy down questions before answering. The questions are in there, which saves time. Also,

the DBE workbooks helped in bringing equality in schools. Whereas previously some schools were under-resourced with LTSM, others were well resourced, but now every school has enough workbooks for each learner (Spaull & Jansen, 2019).

5.2.3 Research question three: How do learners perform with the use of the PSRIP?

Findings for the following theme are summarised under this research question: improvement in learners' reading marks.

5.2.3.1 Improvement in learners' reading marks

The data revealed that the PSRIP has not yet made a large or positive impact on learners' reading marks. Most participants reported that their learners' reading marks have not improved since implementation of the PSRIP in their school. In cases where the learners' reading marks are improving, the participants believed that this was because of the combination of all the reading programmes at schools.

It is understood that, depending on the years and the term, schools still have best readers, medium readers, and poor readers. As reported in Chapter One, one of the PSRIP's objectives is to teach learners the basic concepts of reading, to enable them to perform well in all subjects. It promotes the teaching of reading as one of the most important skills that all teachers in primary schools should be knowledgeable about (NECT, 2016). From the findings, it is clear that this objective has not been achieved.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS THAT EMERGED FROM THE STUDY

Below are the recommendations from the study as a whole, these recommendations are made to address the research objectives of the study,

❖ To explore teachers using the PSRIP in two schools in Gauteng province.
❖ To discover how Grade 6 learners experience the programme.
❖ To identify whether the PSRIP programme improves the reading skills of Grade 6 learners.

Starting with the first objective, the researcher explored teachers in both schools who are currently teaching Grade 6 classes using the PSRIP: The recommendations that are made from the study:

- ❖ Findings revealed that teachers are not really well experienced with the programme and are struggling to implement it properly. The recommendation is that DBE provides continuous training and support to EFAL teachers on programmes being implemented in schools.

- ❖ Collaborating with other schools is recommended, as it was observed that teachers from one school were a bit more knowledgeable about PSRIP than teachers from the other school.

- ❖ There must be an effective process of referring learners who are having learning problems. Each school should at least have remedial classes and trained remedial teachers. This is recommended because participants raised concerns that some learners who cannot read in Grade 6 started their schooling at the same school but were only referred when they got to the Intermediate Phase.

- ❖ Principals, together with the School Management Team, provide necessary support to teachers by organising internal workshops and training for newly appointed teachers. Participants claimed that while experiencing problems in implementing the PSRIP, they do not receive any form of support from their principals or the SMT.

- ❖ The researcher recommends that teachers together with their HoDs should hold regular subject meetings to give updates on each other's experiences with the PSRIP lesson. Regular subject meetings will also help those teachers who are struggling to implement the programme to voice out their concerns about the programme and the team could find ways on how to help one another with the implementation.

5.4 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.4.1 Delimitations

This study was limited to only two schools in Gauteng that are currently teaching EFAL using the PSRIP. There are other provinces, like Free State, that are already using the programme and other schools within Gauteng which are also using the PSRIP. However, because of time and principals' fear to allow researchers into their schools as a result of

COVID-19, the researcher opted to conduct her study in two schools within Gauteng. Moreover, this is a qualitative study, so the researcher is not able to generalise the findings to the greater population, as the sample size is small. The researcher was looking for, and achieved, in-depth data.

5.4.2 Limitations

The proposed population and respondents of my study were EFAL teachers from two schools in Gauteng, and one of the weaknesses was that there were some participants who I had to conduct interviews with telephonically and not face to face, because they were absent from their respective schools. On a positive note, at the two primary schools which were chosen for this study, the researcher had access to and often had meetings with the teachers, w h i c h helped to obtain the necessary data from t h e EFAL teachers.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Literacy problems have been a cause for concern in South Africa for many years; therefore, this study is of great importance, as its findings will help curriculum planners to consider changes which can be carried out in order to implement reading programmes effectively. Also, this study is important as it will help the DBE by providing some information on the effectiveness of this primary school reading programme. Negative results or findings will also help the DBE to work on the programme in order to ensure that it produces good results in reading.

The findings from this study will also help language teachers regarding the methods and strategies they can apply in the classroom in order to create a reading culture. The findings will also help teachers to allow learners to be active participants in their classrooms.

5.6 FUTURE RESEARCH ENDEVOURS

This study was limited to Grade 6 classes in two districts in Gauteng. It is therefore suggested that future research on a similar topic be conducted in other grades and in the

Senior Phase. According to the researcher, this study is the first one about the effectiveness of the PSRIP in Gauteng; therefore, it is also suggested that future research on the PSRIP be conducted in other provinces. The findings of this study revealed that the PSRIP is not implemented well in schools, and teachers are not supported. Further studies could be carried out on other reading programmes, especially the newly implemented ones, with the aim of increasing literacy levels in South Africa. Furthermore, I suggest that a future study be carried out on how newly implemented programmes affect both teachers and learners.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This is the last chapter of the study. It discussed a summary of the findings, recommendations, limitations and delimitations of the study, and implications of the study. The study sought to assess the effectiveness of the Primary School Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP). Through the research questions and the objectives which were clearly outlined in Chapter One, themes were derived which answered the initial research questions. The themes were supported by the relevant literature. The following is a summary of the findings from this study:

- ❖ There are lots of reading challenges experienced by Grade 6 learners. One of these challenges is learners who cannot read at all.
- ❖ Many teachers are struggling to implement the programme effectively because they have not been formally trained on it.
- ❖ The programme has not yet made an improvement to learners' reading marks
- ❖ The PSRIP has enough material for teaching and learning reading, but the problem is that many teachers are not competent in how to use the material effectively.
- ❖ Many teachers are having challenges in presenting the reading lesson.
- ❖ There is a difference between how teachers used to teach the reading skill before implementation of the PSRIP. Many teachers are still not used to the new way of teaching reading.

The following are some of the points on how PSRIP can be carried out to benefit the learners;

❖ All EFAL teachers must be well-trained about the programme.
❖ There should be continuous support and monitoring of the programme to also cater for new EFAL teachers.
❖ Teachers need to be workshopped about the usage of PSRIP material.
❖ New HoDs must also be workshopped about PSRIP so that they are able to develop and support EFAL educators at the school level.
❖ Schools need to keep and make use PSRIP material so that it last for years.

I conclude that the PSRIP as a reading programme would have been effective if the teachers were properly trained and continuous support was provided to them.

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Appendix A: Permission letter to conduct the study

3#Appendix 11 DBE research permission document

<table>
<tr><td>For admin. Use only:
Ref. no.:
Enquiries: 011 3550775/1379
Gumani Mukatuni/ Busi Mchunu</td></tr>
</table>

GAUTENG PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

GDE RESEARCH REQUEST FORM

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN INSTITUTIONS AND/OR OFFICES OF THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. PARTICULARS OF THE RESEARCHER

1.1	Details of the Researcher	
a) Surname and Initials:		KHABELE M.J
b) First Name/s:		MATSHEDISO
c) Title (Prof/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms):		M.S
d) Student Number:		51762420
e) SA ID Number:		8808180670083
f) Work permit no. (If not SA citizen)		

1.2	Private Contact Details	
a. Home Address		c. Postal Address (if different)
23 RINYANI STREET ALLENSNEK		
ROODEPOORT		
b. Postal Code: 1709		d. Postal Code:
e. Tel:		f. Cell:0815443180
g. Fax:		h. E-mail: mantshok@gmail.com

2. PURPOSE & DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

2.1	Purpose of the Research (Place a cross where appropriate)

MED IN CURRICULUM STUDIES

Appendix B: Ethical clearance certificate

UNISA | university of south africa

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2023/02/08

Dear Ms MJ Khabele

Decision: Ethics Approval from 2023/02/08 to 2026/02/08

Ref: **2023/02/08/51762420/20/AM**
Name: Ms MJ Khabele
Student No.:51762420

Researcher(s): Name: Ms MJ Khabele
E-mail address: 51762420@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 0815443180

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr S Meeran
E-mail address: meeras@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 084587684

Title of research:

The effectiveness of a reading improvement Programme for grade 6 English First Additional Language learners.

Qualification: MEd Curriculum studies

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 2023/02/08 to 2026/02/08.

The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2023/02/08 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.

Appendix C: Parental consent form

UNISA | college of education

Dear Parent

Your _____child is invited to participate in a study entitled The effectiveness of a reading improvement programme for grade 6 English First Additional Language learners`.

I am undertaking this study as part of my master`s research at the University of South Africa. The purpose of the study is to research about the effectiveness of a primary school reading improvement programme for grade 6 learners and the possible benefits of the study are the improvement of English First additional language reading skill. I am asking permission to include your child in this study because your child is doing grade 6 at the school which the research is going to be conducted at. I expect to have twenty other children in his/her class participating in the study.

If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/her to:

● Be present at school, in class during the day of class observation.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission. His/her responses will not be linked to his/her name or your name or the school's name in any written or verbal report based on this study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only.

There are no foreseeable risks to your child by participating in the study. Your child will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study; however, the possible benefits to education are that findings and recommendations at the end of research will help the province on how reading in English additional language can be improved and how learners will be more encouraged to do read for meaning. Neither your child nor you will receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusal to participate will not affect him/her in any way. Similarly you can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

The study will take place during regular classroom activities with the prior approval of the school and your child's teacher. However, if you do not want your child to participate, an alternative activity will be available, Your child will be placed in another grade 6 classroom which is not participating only for the time that the researcher will be doing class observations on that day.

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study and you and your child will also be asked to sign the assent form which accompanies this letter. If your child does not wish to participate in the study, he or she will not be included and there will be no penalty. The information gathered from the study and your child's participation in the study will be stored securely on a password locked computer in my locked office for five years after the study. Thereafter, records will be erased.

The benefits of this study are adding to the body of knowledge about how the reading programme can be used to improve reading skill of intermediate learners and how teachers can utilize the material of the reading programme in order to best deliver the reading lesson. There are no potential risks in this study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

If you have questions about this study please ask me or my study supervisor, Dr S Meeran, Department of curriculum and instructional studies, College of Education, University of South Africa. My contact number is 0815443180 and my e-mail is 51762420@mylife.unisa.ac.za. The e-mail of my supervisor is meeras@unisa.ac.za. Permission for the study has already been given by the principal and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. You may keep a copy of this letter.

Name of child:

Sincerely

_____   _____

_____

Parent/guardian's name (print)   Parent/guardian's signature: Date:

MATSHEDISO JULIAN KHABELE

25/10/2022

Researcher's name (print)   Researcher's signature   Date:

APPENDIX D: Requesting assent forms from learners

UNISA | college of education

Dear learner,   Date_____

My name is Teacher Khabele and would like to ask you if I can come and listen to how you read with your teacher during reading lesson I am trying to learn more about how children do reading with their teachers.

If you say YES to do this, I will come and watch you when you are with your teacher doing reading. I will not ask to you to do anything that may hurt you or that you don't want to do. I will also ask your parents if you can take part. If you do not want to take part, it will also be fine with me. Remember, you can say yes or you can say no and no one will be upset if you don't want to take part or even if you change your mind later and want to stop. You can ask any questions that you have now. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, ask me next time I visit your school.

Please speak to mommy or daddy about taking part before you sign this letter. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. A copy of this letter will be given to your parents.

Regards

Teacher M.J Khabele

Your Name	Yes I will take part 😁	No I don't want to take part 😒
Name of the researcher	Matshediso Julian Khabele	
Date	25/10/2022	
Witness		

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Appendix E: Request to conduct the study to principals

Request for permission to conduct research at Shomang Primary School

Title of research: **The effectiveness of Primary school improvement programme.**

Date: _____

Name of the person to who you address the request: Tshepo Mosebi

Department of the person: Education

Contact details of the person (tel and email address)

Request for permission to conduct research at Shomang Primary School.

Title of the title of your research: The effectiveness of a reading improvement programme for grade 6 English First Additional Language learners.

Date: 25 Ocotober 2022

Mrs Mosebi TF
The principal
Cell:084 487 6557
Email: shomangprimaryschool1@gmail.com

Dear Principal

I, Matshediso Khabele am doing research under supervision of Dr Safura Meeran, a Supervisor in the Department of Curriculum and instructional studies towards a Master of education (M Ed) at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: The effectiveness of a reading improvement Programme for Grade 6 English First Additional Language Learners.

The aim of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of the implementation of Primary School Reading Improvement Programme for Grade 6 English FAL learners in two schools in the Gauteng.

Your school has been selected because it is one of the schools already teaching English FAL using PSRIP programme in the province.

The study will entail observing English FAL teachers as they present lessons using the PSRIP method, interviewing them and observing how Grade 6 learners respond to how they are taught to read. Focus group interviews for teachers in the two schools including your school will then be held at a neutral place to hear more of their experiences about PSRIP.

The benefits of this study are that knowledge will be gained as to whether the PSRIP programme is helping learners to be able to read as expected in the intermediate phase and assistance to teachers who are experiencing challenges with implementing PSRIP be given as part of recommendations for this study.

There are no potential risks or harm involved in this study.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Feedback procedure will entail giving back the participants the data after transcribing to check if what is written is what the said. Participants will also be given the researcher`s contact details should they wish to find out about the results of the research. If you have any queries, kindly contact my lecturer, Dr Safura Meeran on 084 597 8648.

Yours sincerely

Matshediso Khabele

The researcher

0815443180

Appendix F: Participant information sheet

UNISA | college of education

Date 05 January 2023
Title : The effectiveness of a reading improvement Programme for grade 6 English First Additional Language learners

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT: EFAL TEACHERS
My name is Matshediso Khabele. I am doing research under the supervision of Dr Safura Meeran, a supervisor in the Department of Curriculum and instructional studies towards an MEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled The effectiveness of a reading improvement Programme for Grade 6 English First Additional Language learners. My lecturer, Dr Meeran can be contacted on 0845978648 if you have any queries regarding the research

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?
 The overall purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the current reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP), which is being implemented in most primary schools is helping in improving the literacy levels of Grade 6 learners. Over the past years, there has been problems faced by intermediate learners especially the Grade 6 learners when it comes to reading English First Additional Language. As a result, there has been quite a number of programmes implemented with the aim of improving reading levels. PSRIP is one of the programmes which is implemented but there hasn't been more studies made about its success in helping learners to read, therefore this study is meant to check if this programme is bringing positive or expected DBE results on reading. This study is expected to collect more data from EFAL teachers that could help curriculum planners or relevant stakeholders in education on the means of this programme to improve reading.
WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE? You are invited to participate in this study because are an important EFAL teacher. I obtained your contact details from one of my colleagues who used to teach at the same school as you are, who also emphasised how passionate you are in teaching EFAL. Since you have been teaching English First Additional Language before and during the implementation of PSRIP, sharing your experiences will help not only me but also the DBE, especially curriculum planners on important aspects to look into when planning EFAL curriculum, especially on reading.
WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?
To gather data, the researcher will use semi-structured interviews with each teacher who is part of the participants of the study, observing the as they teach EFAL using PSRIP,

document analysis which will require reading mark sheets and focus group interviews with all participants of the study. Please note that, to avoid missing any information, the individual semi-structured interview will be audio-taped. Class observations and the focus group interviews will be audio and video recorded. During the interviews, you will only be asked questions related to teaching EFAL, especially on reading part. All the participants will be asked similar questions about PSRIP which will also allow probing. The focus group questions will be unstructured so that each teacher may be able to express themselves about the programme without any fear. The expected duration for the interviews (Individual) will be approximately 60 minutes. That is because language lesson takes 60 minutes in a day according to CAPS. Focus group interviews will also be around 60 minutes and will take time after work hours.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The benefits are that sharing your experiences, your understanding and overall knowledge of the subject especially on PSRIP will help curriculum planners on deciding which aspects to look into when planning EFAL curriculum and also on how to deal with certain challenges which are faced by both teachers and learners on language teaching and learning in intermediate phase. The study can also help in decreasing the illiteracy problems which are faced by our country.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There are no negative consequences to you taking part in the study. Rather, you will benefit the learners to have best reading programmes which allow them to know how to read well. The only inconvenience will be the use of your time. Your identity will not be revealed, as a pseudonym will used.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

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

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Your anonymous data will be used in journal articles and conference proceedings. The journal articles and conference proceedings will be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in them. Please keep in mind that it is sometimes impossible to make an absolute guarantee of confidentiality or anonymity, e.g. when focus groups are used as a data collection method. A focus-group interview is an interview with all participants present. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. However, I shall encourage all participants to do so. For this reason, I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?
The researcher will store hard copies of your answers for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hard copies will be shredded and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer using a relevant software programme.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL
This study has received written approval from the College of Education (CEDU) Research Ethics Review Committee of the, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?
If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact me on 0815443180 or email me on mantshok@gmail.com. You can also contact my supervisor Dr Safura Meeran on 012-4296039/0845878648 or email: meeras@unisa.ac.za. The findings are accessible for five years.

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

Matshediso   Khabele

Appendix G: Interview questions for teachers

UNISA | college of education

1. For how long have been teaching English FAL for?
2. What are the challenges that you have been experiencing with reading in your EFAL classes through the years?
3. When were you trained about PSRIP?
4. What are the changes that PSRIP came with in comparison with how reading has been done before PSRIP implementation?
5. What are the challenges that you came across in presenting reading lessons using PSRIP?
6. How did you overcome those challenges?
7. Is there an improvement on your learners` reading marks since you have started using the programme?

Appendix H: Reading comprehension worksheet

Learning through play

A Soweto teacher does things differently

The parents of children in the Protea South community in Soweto are excited! Every day after school, Mrs Mbambo, a teacher at Protea South Primary School allows kids into the school hall to spend their afternoons. "At first, it was just about keeping the children busy. Then as we went on, I started to realise that this can be so much more than that", said Mrs Mbambo when interviewed.

There are ten different stations in the hall, each with a different game. These games range from Maths, to language games and there are four to six children at each station at a time. Since the start of the programme, parents and teachers have reported that their children are doing so much better at language and mathematics, thanks to Mrs Mbambo.

By Naledi Moleleki

1. What does this article give us information about?
2. Where do you find out **who** the article is about?
3. Where do you find out **what** happened to this person?
4. Where do you find out **where** this happened?
5. How do we know that this is a newspaper article?

Appendix I: Reading and Viewing class activity.

5 Our vegetable garden

Let's talk

We will now read another story. Look at the title and the pictures. Discuss with your partner what this story might be about.

Let's read

Mr Joseph, a Grade 6 teacher, was a keen gardener. He encouraged us to help him start a school vegetable garden. The vegetable garden would work like this:

First, the school would give some of the vegetables to the children at school for lunch every day.

Secondly, every Friday, learners would be able to take some of the vegetables home to their families.

Thirdly, the remaining vegetables would be sold to make money for the school.

We were very excited and we all wanted to start immediately. We helped Mr Joseph to build a fence around the garden area so that animals would not eat the vegetables.

Mr Joseph explained how we should prepare the soil for the vegetables.

We divided ourselves into groups and each group prepared the soil to grow their own vegetables. Mrs Smith from the local nursery (where plants are sold) gave us some cabbage, onion, beetroot and spinach seedlings. We then planted the seedlings in rows.

We took turns to water the seedlings every day, even during holidays. After about six weeks, the spinach was ready for the first harvest. We were all very excited.

As time went by, all the other vegetables grew as well. Everyone was very proud of the garden. We wanted to share what we had learned with our families, so Mr Joseph organised a family day. All our parents came to see our garden. And, of course, they all had a delicious bowl of vegetable soup for lunch.

Appendix: J: Group-guided reading worksheet

A small room behind a building in Hillbrow is buzzing with activity. Around two large tables children laugh and talk as they draw and colour in slogans: "people shall share", "stop the war", "I love all but I don't trust anyone", "I'm the happiest girl in the world". In the corner sits Tsela Maako, who teaches the group.

She is explaining to two children how to use a machine to make badges for their slogans. These are just a few of the kids who attend this resource centre after school. Tsela explains why she started the centre.

"I like working with children. I saw many kids walking around after school doing nothing. So I decided to collect them together where they would be safe and I could do fun things with them".

At the centre

"I come twice a week", says Nomfundo. "I've been coming here for three years. I come because I want to learn new things and I don't want to get involved with gangsters in the streets."

Ivy smiles when she talks about what they do in the afternoons. "We learn to dancing, music, drama and art". The children teach themselves dancing and a teacher from art schools comes to teach them art.

Along the walls of this busy room is a miniature city made out of beautiful cardboard houses. The children made them all themselves.

I make the **evaluation** that learners come to the centre do so because th to – it isn't a requirement.

Nomfundo is one of the chil to come learn at the resour see that Tsela put a lot of v lots of options to attract ch so that they will make the

The learners plante