

**THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR IN IDENTIFYING LEARNERS WITH  
READING PROBLEMS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE**

by

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## DECLARATION

I declare that **THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR IN IDENTIFYING LEARNERS WITH READING PROBLEMS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE** is my own work and that it has not been submitted at any other university.

The sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated by means of complete references.

DP Mkwakwe

DP Mkwakwe

03 April 2012

DATE

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# **THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR IN IDENTIFYING LEARNERS WITH READING PROBLEMS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE**

## **ABSTRACT**

Early reading instruction and identification of learners with reading problems prevent reading difficulties in the Intermediate Phase. The specific aim of this study is to explore the role of the Intermediate Phase educator to assess the learners' reading skills by using observation and assessment activities, in order to identify learners with reading problems. The literature study on reading activities explored the letters of the alphabet, phonemic awareness, spelling, word- recognition, assessment and word-knowledge. The qualitative research was conducted empirically in the form of a case study of one learner from the South African public primary school based in Ikageng location, Potchefstroom. The role of the Intermediate Phase educator is to develop and administer the reading activities, observe a learner when he or she recites; writes and identifies the letters of the alphabet; segment words to show his or her phonological awareness skill; spell words in the dictation test including any written activity; and reads aloud the single written words to test his or her word recognition ability. The themes that emerged from the empirical study are as follows: difficulty in sequencing written letters of the alphabet, inability to segment words, spelling problems and word recognition problems. The study indicated that the participant's reading problems are based on an inability to decode single words.

## **KEY TERMS**

The letters of the alphabet, phonemic awareness, spelling, word recognition, the role of the educator, reading activities, and identification of reading problems.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND

The Foundation Phase in schools serves as the preparatory phase for “reading to learn” in the Intermediate Phase. The goal of reading to learn is to make sure that learners can answer questions correctly as they read, connect what they read with what they already know, and acquire reading skills. Pirani-McGurl (2009:8) found that “...in grades three to four there typically has been a shift from learning to read, the process of acquiring the skills necessary for reading, to reading to learn”.

Mohlala (2008:15) reported on results of primary school learners’ reading skills as follows: “The 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, show that almost 80% of South African children do not have basic reading skills by the time they reach grade 5 and only 2% measure up to the highest international standards of literacy”. Consequently, Denton, Fletcher, Anthony, and Frances (2006:447) emphasise the “critical role of early reading instruction in the prevention of reading difficulties”.

Learners who were exposed from an early age to print language usage (print reading skills) at home and in pre-school develop an ability to learn to read during the Foundation Phase (Wiechers, Prinsloo, Kokot & Van Rensberg 1994:20). Howie (2007:2) mentions that the Foundation Phase serves as the preparatory phase for reading to learn in the Intermediate Phase. Therefore, the grade four learners have learned how to read and are ready for reading to learn.

Most of the Intermediate Phase educators especially grade four educators teach learners who are not ready for reading to learn. The Intermediate Phase educators would not have time to teach the basics such as how to read. The Foundation Phase educators’ role is to teach the basics of reading (Mohlala 2008:23). Therefore, the grade four learners should have learned to read, and should be ready to learn from other subject content. However, it is evident that educators cannot guarantee that all learners would have learnt to read. Reading problems illustrate that many of the

Foundation Phase learners seemingly pass through their grades with low reading literacy levels and many Foundation Phase educators may be unaware that their learners have reading problems or they may feel powerless to do anything about it (Pretorius & Machet 2004:129).

The importance of reading and writing skills can never be underestimated. Botha (2000:18) gives examples of some of the most important things in our lives that are put into written form and therefore require reading also: bank statements, report cards, note from our children's teachers, electricity accounts, records of purchases, contracts, church bulletins, instructions, price tags, shop and business signs, food labels, newspapers, road signs and advertisings.

Many educators are concerned about what will happen to the 80% (Mohlala 2008:15) of South African children who do not have basic reading skills when they are suppose to utilise the above examples in their daily lives. Therefore it is important for adults (parents and educators) to identify learners' reading problems as early as possible. Adults should not depend on the few success stories and hope that a learner that begins slowly will only need more time to catch up. Moreover, there is no research to support this sudden growth (Ziolkowska 2007:79).

Some researchers, De Witt, Lessing and Lenayi (2008:380); Menzies, Mahdavi and Lewis (2008:67); and Ziolkowska (2007:79) raised their concern that learners with reading problems should be identified early. Davis, Lindo and Compton (2007:34) give examples to identify reading skills: "Letter knowledge, phonological awareness and word recognition when measured in preschool through early first grade emerged as the most reliable indicators of serious reading problems". When the Foundation Phase educators identify learners who are not ready to read to learn and provide intervention, most of the learners will enter the Intermediate Phase having the developed reading skills. Coyne, Zipoli, and Ruby, (2006) add that schools can prevent a high failure rate, especially in Intermediate Phase. Often learners in the Intermediate Phase do not receive strong reading instruction in the early grades. When learners received support during early grades (preschool, first grade or second grade) reading problems can be prevented.

General screening information from the previous years' summative assessments can be used by the Intermediate Phase educator to identify learners who did not meet pass requirements from the Foundation Phase. Boyse (2007:4) caution that "you can't tell by looking that a learner has learning difficulties". Learning difficulties affect acquisition, retention, understanding, and organisation of reading skills for example. To identify a reading problem a learner might experience difficulties in the following areas: letter knowledge, phonemic awareness, spelling, and word recognition. Therefore, the role of the educator is to use various reading assessments procedures to identify learners who experience difficulties in letter knowledge, phonemic awareness, spelling, and word recognition

## **1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH**

Some learners' learning difficulties are diagnosed in Intermediate Phase when a parent or educator notices that a learner is struggling to do work he or she should be able to do easily. But other learners develop sophisticated ways of covering up their learning issues, so learning difficulties don't show up until the teen years when school work and life gets more complicated. The role of the educator in assessment is important to identify learners who are covering up their reading problems. As a researcher and an educator I became aware of the learners' reading problems when I marked their test or exam scripts. The answers that most of the learners provided indicated that they could not read nor recognise words independently. Also those who managed to read often do not read with an understanding. During my eighteen years of teaching learners in grades four, five and six, I have found that many learners, who were promoted the previous year, continue to need assistance in reading. Independent work is expected of such learners during some assignments, class tests and examinations.

Educators try to support learners by preparing them on how to read and understand instructions and questions, during class work. Yet, when the very same learners are given the very same question in a test or examinations they perform poorly.

Other factors which might contribute to a poor performance are when a learner has sight problems, hearing problems, medical problems, emotional problems or come from a family that does not place a value on educational activities.

Since 2007, the Department of Education in South Africa has annually requested from all educators to identify learners who have reading problems. We as educators just identify learners on the basis of their performance rather than the specific achievement during the learning process. Some of the educators use prejudice to identify learners who have reading problems. For example, educators use the knowledge that they have about the parents of a learner to judge the learner as having a reading problem like the parent had. Negative remarks from educators often harm the learner's self- image and prevent a learner from developing confidence in reading skills. Poor performance and prejudice may lead to incorrect placement in special schools.

In the Intermediate Phase reading enables learners to understand content. Therefore, without accurate and fluent reading skills, access to all the subjects, for example mathematics, languages, technology, etc, will be diminished (Berg & Stegelman 2003:47). It is important for the parents and the educators to note that reading does not unfold naturally as the child grows and matures but develops with direct instruction (Berg & Stegelman 2003:47). Therefore, the role of both the parents and the educator(s) in teaching reading and identifying learners who cannot read is very important.

In developing reading skill, the knowledge of the letters of the alphabet should be introduced by the parents from the age of two to four. If the child is ready to learn the alphabet, he or she will not learn it unless the parents give him or her, the opportunity to learn it. All the parents, including those who are poor, functionally illiterate and vulnerable, can contribute vital information such as introducing the letters of the alphabet to their children (Engelbrecht & Green 2007:197). Without knowing the letters of the alphabet, children cannot use them to form words. It implies that children, who have not been introduced to the letters of the alphabet from an early age as two, may not establish the necessary confidence and reading skills to function throughout their academic career and within the community.

Informal reading early in life on the letters of the alphabet, both at home and in pre-school may prevent later problems with learning the alphabet which is one of the common signs of reading problems. Early informal learning prepares the child for school readiness. The Foundation Phase in schools serves as the preparatory phase for “reading to learn” in the Intermediate Phase. Pirani-McGuri (2009:8) found that “in grades three to four there typically has been a shift from learning to read to reading to learn”. McGuinness (1997) found that appropriate early reading instruction on later reading success makes the first three years of school the most important in a child’s life. Thus, pre-school, first grade, and second grade teachers are among the most important.

There are various tasks in the reading process. The Foundation Phase and the Intermediate Phase educators should possess an in-depth understanding of the various tasks in the reading process and an array of strategies to teach these skills to learners who have difficulties in reading (Adams, 1990; Bishop, 2003; Hammill 2004). The reading skills to be taught in pre-school are that learners learn the sounds of the consonant letters and all the letters except the vowels (a, e, i, o, and u). First and second graders typically learn all the sounds of letters and letter combination.

The understanding that reading will not simply unfold, but rather be taught, places enormous responsibility on educators. It is important to admit that poor teacher training may also result in learners reading problems. If educators in the Foundation Phase have acquired an array of reading assessment strategies, it may prevent learners from developing reading problems.

The Intermediate Phase educator anticipates that learners from the Foundation Phase entering his or her class will be able to read effectively enough to allow the mastery of subject content. If the subject content is offered in another language different from the one the learner was exposed to in the Foundation Phase, reading problems could be expected in the Intermediate Phase.

In the Foundation Phase the learners in the selected school are taught reading in Setswana. When they resume grade four in the Intermediate Phase they read and

learn in English which is referred to as cross- linguistic transfer. The term cross-linguistic transfer is used to describe what happens when an individual who is learning a new language brings aspects of his or her first language to a second language (Shore & Sabatin 2009:3). When a learner possesses the knowledge of the letters of the alphabet, phonemic awareness skills, spelling skills and word recognition skills, he or she should be able to read in English. The learners who use cross-linguistic transfer are referred to as English Language Learners (ELL) because they are in the process of acquiring English. Therefore, the Intermediate Phase educator should use the baseline assessment to assess the necessary basic reading skills acquired in the Foundation Phase, for example, the written knowledge of the letters of the alphabet, letter-sound relationships, phonological awareness, spelling, and word recognition.

When a learner is exposed to print from as early as two years of age, he or she builds reading experience (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:301). Experience in this case refers to the background knowledge of a learner (a literate home environment and the first language in which the learner was introduced to reading) and highly skilled Foundation Phase educators (Singh 2009:95).

Good readers are able to manipulate sounds heard or read in ways that will assist them, and to understand the relationship of phonemes to graphemes to read words (Dahmer 2010:6). The Intermediate Phase educator should assess whether his or her learners know the sounds of the letters and combinations in order to help them to know which letters to use as they write words. Letter-name knowledge is the strong predictor of learners' spelling ability.

The Intermediate Phase educator's role is to assess whether his or her learners know the sounds of the letters and combinations in order to help them to know which letters to use as they spell words.

Spelling requires a learner to produce in written or oral form the correct sequence of letters that form a particular word. To do this, a learner converts phonemes (sounds) into graphemes (written letters). Thus, a word is either spelled correctly or it is misspelt. The role of the educator is to assess whether the learner has spelled the



given words correctly or incorrectly. It is also vital to find the causes of the inability to spell correctly in order to provide the relevant assistance.

Learning to spell is a difficult process. One has to learn the correct order of the written letters of the alphabet, learn all the sounds of letters, and letter combinations in order to read, spell and identify words in print. Word recognition (decoding) and spelling (encoding) are key to reading and writing. Word recognition and spelling require a number of sub-skills.

Sub-skills in word recognition can be identified as being: attending to letter orientation, attending to letter order, attending to word detail, sound matching, and sound blending (Steed 1984:36). Sub-skills in spelling can be identified as saying the separate sounds; hear the sound, point to the grapheme; hear the sound, write the grapheme, to spell the word; sound out and blend the selected graphemes to check the spelling. Therefore, the role of the Intermediate Phase educator is to assess all the above sub-skills in order to identify learners with word recognition and spelling problems. There are characteristics of learners who have difficulty in identifying words in print.

Difficulty in associating sounds with letters or letter cluster symbols, difficulty to attending to letter order in a word, and difficulty seeing parts or patterns in words are the characteristics of learners who have difficulty in identifying words in print (Steed 1984:10). In addition, learners who have difficulty with word recognition process often have confusion with left or right directionality, exhibit reversal and their spelling is significantly not sound related.

Learners are taught the concept of word in grade R and early first grade. If a learner had a poor concept of word from the first grade, he or she is not likely to learn to recognize new words in print (Gillet, Temple & Crawford 2004:16).

In their study Lekgoko and Winskel (2008:67) confirmed that the relationship between letter knowledge, phoneme awareness and reading ability in Setswana and English proved to be quite complex. For reading in Setswana, the first reading language, phoneme awareness and not letter knowledge was found to be a predictor

of word reading. However, when reading English, the second reading language, letter knowledge rather than phoneme awareness was found to be the prominent factor in predicting word reading. Poor word identification skills may lead struggling readers to read less frequently and, therefore, fall behind their peers (Stanovich 2000). However, knowledge of letters of the English alphabet will also facilitate reading in Setswana and English. Learners who experienced problems in learning the letters of the alphabet from the first grade might find it difficult to read in fourth grade.

Juel's (1988) longitudinal study in Ziolkwaska (2007:79) found that "first grade learners who were poor readers still remained poor readers in fourth grade". The aim of this study is to develop clear selection criteria and identify learners who have problems in writing in the correct order all the letters of the alphabet, problems in segmenting sounds in words, problems in spelling words correctly, and problems in word recognition. The identification will be done by the researcher as an educator in the intermediate phase in the selected grade four, five and six classes.

The learner (s) who cannot write the letters of the alphabet in the correct order, have difficulty in segmenting sounds in the five high frequency mathematical concepts, are not able to spell correctly all the five mathematical concepts, and will have difficulty in recognising the very same five mathematical concepts before and after instruction will form the sample of the study.

The roles of both the parents and the educators are to teach the learner how to read because reading develops with informal instruction at home and direct instruction at school. The learner will be able to acquire various reading skills which will improve his or her performance in school. The Intermediate Phase educator should assess the following reading skills: letter knowledge, phonemic awareness, the ability to spell, and word recognition, when identifying a learner with reading problems.

At his age I would like to state that there is a difference between not acquiring reading skills because of other factors such as neurological disorder; visual, hearing, or physical handicaps, mental retardation, emotional disturbance and late introduction to elementary reading skills when developing a reading problem. The

participant in this study developed reading problems because of the late introduction to elementary reading skills. A statement of the problem is discussed next.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The Intermediate Phase educators need to assess reading skills, but due to a lack of criteria, they just assume that learners are able to read, which for many learners are clearly not the case.

The aim of the study is to provide a set of criteria which the Intermediate Phase educator could use in assessing the reading abilities of learners entering Intermediate Phase and each sub-aim will focus on assessing a particular skill.

### **1.4 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH**

The following aims will direct the study.

- To determine the role of an Intermediate Phase educator when assessing a learner's ability to write in the correct order at least thirteen letters of the alphabet
- To determine the role of the Intermediate Phase educator when assessing a learner who is phonologically aware of the language of instruction, which in this study is English
- To determine which assessment method that an Intermediate Phase educator use to assess a learner's spelling ability
- To determine how an Intermediate Phase educator assess a learner's ability to recognise mathematical high frequency words

These questions lead to the specific aim of the study.

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHOD**

I will now give a short introduction on the research method, but will expand on this in Chapter 3. This is just a short explanation on what this investigation is based on, which research approach and research design will be used also how the participant(s) will be selected.

The research constitutes an in depth investigation into the reading abilities of learners in the Intermediate School Phase. The research design developed from an interpretative phenomenological view to select one participant from a group of learners who possibly experienced reading problems. A case study method was followed to interpret, understand and support one learner with possible reading problems. I used a qualitative approach in an attempt to understand in depth and to describe the complex factors that affected the case (Rule & John 2011).

The following sections describe the methods to be used to address the research questions, including design, setting and subjects, data collection and interpretation, ethical considerations, and demarcation.

### **1.5.1 Design**

Bromely (1990:302) defines a case study research as “a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest”. The current study used a case study design.

### **1.5.2 Setting and subjects**

The aim was to determine my role as educator when identifying a participant from a group of learners with possible reading problems. The group of learners with possible reading problems from three Intermediate Phase classes in one South African, public Primary School, Boitirelo in the North West Province, will participate in this study. Class A consisting of 40 grade four learners, class B 44 grade five learners and class C 36 grade six learners.

The learners in the Intermediate Phase use Setswana as their first language and English as the second language and also as language of teaching and learning.

### **1.5.3 Data collection and interpretation**

Interviews, observation and assessment strategies will be most suitable data collection methods for this specific study. The type of interview most relevant will be the semi-structured interview as it allows for probing and clarification of answers, and to identify emerging lines of inquiry that are related to the research question. “Elaborating probes are designed to get the full picture and normally involve asking the participant to tell you more about a certain example or answer given” (Maree 2007:89).

### **1.5.4 Ethical considerations**

The participant in this study is one learner. To protect the identity of the participant, he will be identified as Learner A in this study. All the documents containing identifiers, for example, the names and surname of both the learner and the parent will be removed from the study. Learner A is a minor therefore the researcher must obtain permission from the education department, the head of the school and the parent before conducting her research (Maree 2007:300). The researcher obtained permission to conduct the research from the district manager, the principal of the school and the parent of Learner A. The confidentiality of the results obtained in this study is assured. The results in this study will be made available in the format of recommendations and criteria of assessment for Intermediate Phase educators.

### **1.5.5 Demarcation**

The researcher used a purposive sampling to select a learner according to predetermined criteria for learners with reading problems. A learner who met the predetermined criteria for learners with reading problems was then selected to become the participant in this study.

## **1.6 CLARIFICATION OF THE CONCEPTS**

The following concepts will constitute the subject matter of this study: letters of the alphabet, phonemic awareness, spelling, word recognition, the role of the educator, reading, and identification.

### **1.6.1 Letters of the alphabet**

Wales (2009:1) describe “a letter as a grapheme in an alphabetic system of writing. Letters compose phonemes and each phoneme represents a sound.

### **1.6.2 Phonemic awareness**

Nullman (2009:13) refers to the knowledge that words are comprised of individual sounds that can be identified, segmented, blended and manipulated.

### **1.6.3 Spelling**

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

### **1.6.4 Word recognition**

Matlin (2002:313) state that “readers can recognise a word directly from the printed letters”. Words are read letter by letter serially from left to right. You start off by finding the first letter, then the second, and so on until you recognize the word (Larson 2004). The words in this study are identified in isolation.

### **1.6.5 The role of the educator**

The concept role is described as a person’s expected function (Reader’s Digest Complete Word-finder 1993:1333). The Employment of Educator’s Act 76 of 1998 outlines the duties and responsibilities of the educator in a public school as to engage in class teaching and assessment amongst others.

### **1.6.6 Reading**

Reading is making sense of the printed words in context (Dela 1994:24).

### **1.6.7 Identification**

The educator will use the results of reading activities to identify learners with reading problems. The reading activities are: writing in the correct order the letters of the alphabet, correctly segmenting words, and literacy activities.

## **1.7 RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

Chapter One explained the background, analysis, awareness, investigation, statement of the problem and the research design. In Chapter Two a critical investigation revealed a literature study. The following concepts: letters of the alphabet, phonemic awareness (segmentation), spelling, and word recognition, the role of the educator in assessing and instruction were investigated.

In Chapter Three the research design will be described. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:31) describe the research design and procedures for conducting a study as, including when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained. The data will be collected during the third term from the selected classes of grades four, five and six during Mathematical periods by the researcher as an educator. A pre-test consisting of word sums testing the language usage during maths period will be administered as a baseline assessment in the selected classes. The results will be analysed by the researcher. The learners who did not get a pass mark will be taught and further assessed on the very same reading activities they were taught. The learner(s) who did not respond to intervention in all the activities indicate that they have reading problems. Also included are the specific measures used to ensure research ethics.

Chapter Four introduces the empirical research findings conducted to understand the problems of educators highlighted in this study. The findings of this study will be compared with that of the literature review.

In Chapter Five conclusions and recommendations are reported, as well as a summary of the investigation, and any negative experiences or limitations in the current study that could have impacted on the findings.

## **1.8 LIMITATIONS**

Although the aim was to determine the role of the educator to identify learners with reading problems, only one learner was selected according to the criteria. Therefore an in depth investigation was done in the form of a case study to be able to report back on the educator's role and the learning problems of the participant. As one learner was investigated in this study it is incapable of providing a generalising conclusion (Maree 2007:76). The conclusion is only applicable to the learner in his own context. It is therefore a bounded conclusion (Maree 2007:113). In addition, the researcher is the sole researcher and an observer which can lead to subjectivity in the study. Yet, to ensure internal validity on accurate explanation and administration of information, all transcriptions of interviews, descriptions of observations, and findings of assessments were reviewed by an expert educator and colleague.

## **1.9 SUMMARY**

Reading problems should not exist in the Intermediate Phase. Yet the background of the study may answer the question of why reading problems exists? The following facts may answer the above concern: poor reading instruction, 80% of South African children have no basic reading skills by the time they reach grade 5, childhood illiterate societies, late identification of learners with reading problems, and lack of early interventions to remediate reading failure.

During the analysis of the problem I as an educator became aware of the reading problems of the learners when I marked their scripts. The answers that most learners provided, for example, indicated that they cannot read with an



understanding. In this chapter one, I focussed mainly on the role of the Intermediate Phase educator(s) in the identification of learners who lack basic reading skills. The Intermediate Phase educator(s) will use various reading assessments procedures to identify learners who experience difficulties in letter knowledge, phonemic awareness, spelling and word recognition instead of using summative assessment and prejudice to identify learners who have reading problems. In the next chapter a literature review on reading problems will be introduced.

## **CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter two is divided into two parts. The first part is on reading which involves what learners should be able to accomplish when in the Intermediate Phase. Learners should be able to read and write the letters of the alphabet, perform consistently better on measures of phonemic awareness, produce in written form the correct sequence of letters that form a particular word, and be skilled at recognizing word. The four elements of reading are to be briefly discussed.

The second part focuses on the role of the educator in assessing the four elements of reading.

The letters of the alphabet are discussed in the next paragraph.

### **2.2 THE LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET**

I intend to address issues in reading and writing that impact on learners' quality of reading and writing skills in their Intermediate Phase. The letters of the alphabet play an important role in the reading process. Therefore, it is essential that Intermediate Phase educators assess learners' knowledge of the letters of the alphabet.

#### **2.2.1 What is a letter of the alphabet?**

English and Setswana both use the letters of the alphabet. Wales (2009) defines "a letter as a grapheme in an alphabet system of writing. Letters compose phonemes and each phoneme represents a sound". For example, a single sound is represented by a single letter and a pair of letters represented by a single phoneme called diagraph (Wales 2009). Letter *s* and *h* make the sound *sh* (*sh* is a diagraph). Shop, wish, cash, and shoe are some of the examples of words that contain the diagraph *sh*.

### **2.2.2 When to teach the letters of the alphabet?**

At the age two a child's vocabulary depending on literate environmental stimulation can increase to 200 words to produce telegraphic sentences. In telegraphic sentences only important words are used, *Tim crying* (Mwamwenda 1996:162). It implies that the two year old cognitive ability has developed to acquire letters of the alphabet.

Mwamwenda (1996:89) defines cognitive development as "the development of a person's mental capacity to engage in understanding, remembering, and knowledge acquisition". Therefore, children might begin to develop the cognitive ability to learn the alphabet between the ages of two to four. If the child is not ready to learn the alphabet then he or she will not learn it. In contrast, if the child is ready to learn the alphabet, he or she will not learn it unless the parents give him or her an opportunity to learn it.

### **2.2.3 How to teach alphabet?**

Parents can take an active role in their children's cognitive development by teaching them the letters of the alphabet. The parents can use a song, book or chart to teach a child the letters of the alphabet. Both the parents and the child should look and even point to the letters at an illustrated sheet while they sing the song together. Alternatively, they can make use a book to read and talk while they teach the alphabet.

The clearly illustrated ABC books: Yaden, Smolkin and MacGilluray (1993); or The Charley's alphabet series: Alphabet Adventure (2001), Alphabet Mystery (2003) and Alphabet Recue (2006) by Audrey Wood; or a chart can be used by pointing to the letter as the parent and the child sing the song. The child should be given an opportunity to point and sing on his or her own. The sounds (phonemes) in the song represent letters of the alphabet. Later in school the role of the educator is to assess the child's ability to match the sounds correctly with the letters as an indicator that he or she is ready to write the letters.

The learning process is enforced when learners write the letters of the alphabet. The parent is advised to write together with the child inviting him or her to copy the first three letters: A, B, and C because they are simple and start the alphabet as well as indicate the order of the alphabet. The letter writing process helps the child to take note of the various combinations of lines that form the alphabet.

There are different lines that form the alphabet. For example, vertical, horizontal, diagonal, curved, open, closed or intersecting are the different letter lines that form the alphabet (Deacle 2002:11). These lines help the child to recognize that each grapheme has a distinct feature and different combinations of lines create each unique symbol". For example, the learner must be able to recognize that letter "b" is not the same as letter "d".

#### **2.2.4 Why is the alphabet important?**

English has alphabetic, linear writing system. Therefore, readers have to know about letters as decoding involves recognising letters and their sounds (Wessels 2009:91). Knowledge of the letters of the alphabet builds a good foundation for acquiring reading skills. The implication of a learner who did not receive a good foundation of the knowledge of the alphabet is that he or she will have difficulty with other aspects of reading or writing (Bradely & Stahl 2001). The role of the educator was to assess whether the learner can write all the letters of the alphabet in the correct order without reversing nor repeating or omitting others.

The Intermediate Phase educator amongst other tasks assesses letter -name knowledge. Letter-name knowledge before formal reading instruction is one of the strongest predictors of children's reading ability (Bradely & Stahl 2001). Letter-name knowledge contributes to reading by mediating letter-sound knowledge and may be a precursor or facilitates phonological awareness.

## **2.3 PHONEMIC AWARENESS**

Shore and Sabatini (2009:4) categorise phonemic awareness as “a specific type of phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is the perception of speech sounds”

### **2.3.1 What is phonemic awareness?**

Nullman (2009:13) refers to phonemic awareness as “the knowledge that words are comprised of individual sounds that can be identified, segmented, blended and manipulated”. Therefore, phonemic awareness is defined as “the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words” (Luthy & Stevens 2011:1). As a result, “it is imperative that learners before they learn to read print, they need to become aware of how the sounds in words work” (Luthy & Stevens 2011:1). The role of the educator was to assess the learner’s knowledge of how the sounds in words work.

Once a learner has phonemic awareness, he or she can be able to spell or read different words. The role of the educator in this study was to assess whether a learner was able to hear, identify, and segment individual sounds in written single words.

### **2.3.2 Why is phonemic awareness important?**

According to several researchers, a strong and consistent correlation can be found between preschool children’s levels of phonological knowledge and later reading achievement (Blachman, 1984; Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Fox & Routh, 1975; Share, Jorm, Maclean, & Mathews, 1984, in Berg & Stegelman 2003:51). Phonemic awareness is important because it improves word reading and helps learners learn to spell (Luthy & Stevens 2011:1). In early studies of the relationship between phonological awareness and reading it was found that “good readers performed consistently better on measures of phonological awareness than do poor readers” (Bradley & Bryant, 1983; in Berg & Stegelman, 2003:51).

The preceding findings imply that phonological skills are strongly associated with word reading ability. The role of the educator was to measure the phonological awareness of the learners in order to determine the difference in their performance in word reading ability. The learners who consistently do not perform better would be classified as poor readers in this study. In addition, Muter and Snowling (1998) in Berg and Stegeman (2003:51) found “the relationship between phonological awareness and reading to be consistent across grades when testing learners from 4 years of age to grade 9”.

Many learners in Intermediate Phase experience subtle problems of not recognising words, and as Luthy and Stevens (2011:2) confirm learners who cannot hear and work with the phonemes of spoken words will have difficulties learning how to relate phonemes to single letters and digraphs such as *sh /ch/ th/ fr/ wh/ nk* when they see them in written words.

Phonemic awareness plays an important role in orthographic processing. Orthography is the knowledge of correct spelling (Sun-Aperin 2007:1). Spelling in this case refers to the ability to map letters to phonemes or sounds when writing single words.

### **2.3.3 How to assess phonemic awareness?**

The educator can develop reading activities, for example, segmentation of the first and the last sound in a word. The questions might be:

- What is the first sound in “add”? and
- What is the last sound in “add”? or
- What are all the sounds you hear in “add”?

Luthy and Stevens (2011:2) gives examples of early readers who can show they have phonemic awareness by “isolating and saying the first or last sound in a word, combining or blending the separate sounds in a word in order to say the word, and breaking up or segmenting a word into its separate sounds”. By contrast, learners

who lack phonemic awareness skills are not able to segment words into phonemes. Consequently, they do not develop the ability to decode single words accurately and fluently, an inability that is the distinguishing characteristic of learners with reading disabilities. The most reliable indicator of a reading disability is an inability to decode single words. Therefore, phonemic awareness is important because it improves learner's word spelling, reading and comprehension. The role of the educator was to find out that the learners who experience spelling problems, phonemic awareness will help them to spell correctly (Luthy & Stevens 2011:2).

## 2.4 SPELLING

Spelling requires that a learner produce in written form the correct sequence of letters that form a particular word. The skills of spelling contain many sub-skills. One of the sub-skills is the perception of letter-sounds (Luthy & Stevens 2011:2). A learner who was not taught letter-sounds correspondence in pre-school, it will be difficult or sometimes impossible for him or her to spell correctly. Spelling problems might result from didactic deficit (Richards 2001:1). Thus assessment of letter- sound correspondence is a strategy for measuring the knowledge to spell.

The role of the educator was to assess single words whether they were spelled correctly or not spelled correctly (Richards 2001:14). It is important for the educator to realise that "the complexity of the letter code is compounded by having many different letter combinations" (Richards 2001:14). Therefore, the educator should take into consideration the grade four learners' spelling ability of many different letter combinations when designing the spelling test because it is for the first time that the grade four learners are exposed to the English language.

Richards (2001:16) suggests three factors that negatively contribute to spelling accuracy:

- *The frequency with which the word is used in the English language. The less the learner is exposed to a word the less likely the learner will remember the spelling of that particular word,*

- *The length of the word, and*
- *The presence of tricky letters or letter combinations*

Usually a learner at the end of grade three has no difficulty with spelling most of the words correctly (Richards 2001:17). Phonemic awareness is one of the essential necessary skills for spelling. The Intermediate Phase learners did not receive English instruction in phonological awareness during the Foundation Phase. Therefore, it is imperative that English language Intermediate Phase educators teach learners various English phonological awareness activities (Richards 2001:19) in order to prevent spelling problems. Learners with spelling problems often lack phonological awareness. The phonologically based spelling errors, Richards (2001:22) refers them to as omissions.

Richards (2001:24) outlines other spelling deficits which include:

- *Poor perceptual skills,*
- *Inadequate knowledge of sounds,*
- *Omissions of letters,*
- *Additions of letters,*
- *Incorrect sequence of letters within words, and*
- *Problems perceiving words accurately.*

Richards (2001:24) states that “deficit in perception amongst others includes reversals”. A learner who experiences most of the above spelling deficits will have difficulty in recognising words. The learners who experience word recognition problems suffer in silence. The implication of their suffering becomes evident in their poor academic performance.

## **2.5 WORD RECOGNITION**

Shore and Sabatini (2009:4) compare a fluent reader to dysfluent reader as “the former (fluent reader) skilled at recognizing words and the latter (dysfluent reader)



slow, hesitant, makes errors in word identification and pause frequently to sound out words”.

### **2.5.1 The method learners use to recognize words**

Matlin (2002:313) state that “readers can recognise a word directly from the printed letters”. Words are read letter by letter serially from left to right. You start off by finding the first letter, then the second, and so on until you recognize the word (Larson 2004). The words in this study are identified in isolation. The educator must assess the learner’s knowledge of the letters of the alphabet. One of the best print knowledge predictions of future word reading skill is letter naming skill (Davis, Lindo, & Compton 2007: 34).

In addition, words will be recognised through phonetic composition (Dela 1994:24). The role of the educator is to assess the phonetic ability of the learners to recognise words. Singh (2009:98) point out that “word recognition is a follow-up step to phonetic development. Once learners can recognise breakthrough words, they can read”.

Singh (2009:98) gives examples of breakthrough words as “words that are commonly used when reading”. The commonly used words when reading mathematical instructions or questions such as whole numbers, fractions, perimeter, number sentence, add, multiply, subtract, etc will be used in this study to develop different reading activities (Mathematics Guideline Manual for Grades 4 to 6 Final Draft: North West Department of Education). For example, the reading activities would be based on spelling, phonemic segmentation, writing the letters of the alphabet, reading aloud a list of words. The role of the educator was to use the different reading activities to assess the learners’ ability to read.

### **2.5.2 The mental process learners use to recognize words**

The knowledge of advanced word analysis skills is essential if learners are to progress in their knowledge of the alphabetic writing system and gain the ability to

read fluently. Efficient word recognition is dependent on more complete knowledge of sounds and symbols (Stahl & Mckenna 2006:51). Whereas, advanced word analysis involves being skilled at phonological processing (recognizing and producing the speech sounds in words) and having an awareness of letter-sound correspondences in words (Stahl & Mckenna 2006:51).

### **2.5.3 Factors contributing to word recognition problems**

Word recognition is a requirement for the reading action. Problems in reading occur when a learner is not able to recognise words (Dela 1994:134). Most learners who experience reading failure demonstrate early and persistent problems in learning how to accurately identify printed words (Berg & Stegelman 2003:49). Lack of alphabetic knowledge and lack of phonemic awareness are the factors that might contribute to word recognition problem in this study.

#### **2.5.3.1 Lack of alphabetic knowledge**

Stahl and Mckenna (2006:161) remark that “the first pre- alphabetic phase depicts pre-readers before they have learned much about alphabetic. Their knowledge of letters and phonemic awareness is limited or nil and result in difficulties understanding and applying the alphabetic principle in decoding unfamiliar words (Berg & Stegelman 2003:49). Learners who have not learned the letter-sound correspondence in the word are essentially non-readers when it comes to recognizing words from their letters. Stahl and Mckenna (2006:161) point out that “if these learners recognise individual words, they do it by noting or remembering salient visual cues around the word”.

#### **2.5.3.2 Lack of phonemic awareness**

Intermediate Phase Educator’s role is to assist learners to develop phoneme awareness because is the foundation on which reading knowledge is built (Stahl & McKenna 2006:51). The educator might find out that, learners who lack phonemic

awareness have difficulty in learning to read, a difficulty that is magnified as learners progress through the grades.

Learners who do not understand the function of the letters of the alphabet because of didactic deficit might develop word recognition problem. One of the functions of letters is phonemic representation. Letters in English orthography may represent a particular sound. The single letter *c* in the word *cat* represents the single sound /k/. In the word *ship* the digraph *sh* (two letters) represents the sound (ʃ) (Wikipedia The Free Encyclopaedia).

The same sequence of letters may indicate different sounds when it occurs in different positions within a word. For instance, the digraph *gh* represent the sound /f/ at the end of some words, such as *rough* /raf/. At the beginning of syllable, the digraph *gh* represents the sound /g/, such as in the word *ghost* (Wikipedia The Free Encyclopaedia). Learners who do not have phonological awareness skill experience difficulty in recognising words.

The educator might have discovered that the learner's difficulty in recognising words stem from the lack of knowledge sounds. Logographic readers often give no response at all when faced with a word they do not know, because they do not have strategy for sounding out words (Gillet, Temple & Crawford 2006:28). Most learners with reading problems do not develop phonological awareness as a result use complex visual cues to recognize words (Stahl & Mckenna 2006:51).

#### **2.5.4 Teaching new words in the second language**

Weideman and Van Rensburg (2009:158) point out that "if one wishes to read successfully in another language, one must be a proficient reader in one's first language in order to transfer the (generic) skill of reading to the desired target language (English)". The phonological awareness skills for instance will be transferred from Setswana to English in this study. The phonemes in Setswana are different from English.

Sun-Aperin (2007:9) defines phonological transfer as the process by which phonological processing skills in one language (Setswana) facilitates reading and spelling in another language (English). The Intermediate Phase educator should understand that the Setswana phonemes are different from the English phonemes (Lekgoko & Winskel 2008:62). For example, the digraph *ng* starts a word *ngaka* (doctor) in Setswana on the other hand in English serves as the suffix indicating present continuous tense in a word *reading*. Therefore the Intermediate Phase learners need to be taught English phonemes whenever a new word is taught.

In addition, Hugo (2008:63-64) give examples of the period it takes to acquire English as a second language: “In the USA it is estimated that it takes four to eight years to become proficient enough in English as a second language to achieve the ability to read or communicate abstract ideas.” Furthermore, Feinberg (2002:10-11) confirms, “in Canada it is reported that it takes four to seven years to develop the ability in a second language to make a long-term success at school”.

By contrast in South Africa, learners are not given an opportunity to become proficient in English as a second language. They are expected to learn in English although they have not acquired the language yet.

Some researchers showed that learners had generally low reading levels. At whatever grade level and in whatever language they are tested, our (South African) learners are struggling to read (Pretorius & Mokhwesana 2009:56; Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007; Pretorius, 2007).

## **2.6 ASSESSMENT**

The role of the educator is to use the research questions to assess learners with reading problems.

### **2.6.1 Diagnosis of reading problems and testing procedures**

Psycho-diagnosis can be described as the analysis and explanation of a client's problems (Corey, 2000:52). It may include an explanation of the causes of the client's difficulties, an account of how these problems developed over time, a classification of any disorder, a specification of preferred treatment procedure, and an estimate of the chances for a successful resolution. The purpose of diagnosis is to identify problems in word recognition. Once problem areas are clearly identified, the educator and the learner are able to establish the goals of the intervention process, and then a treatment plan can be tailored to the unique needs of the learner. A diagnosis is not a final category; rather it provides a working hypothesis that guides the educator in understanding the learner (Corey, 2000:52).

Testing procedures are used in order to get information about a learner or to provide the educator with information so that he or she can make realistic decisions about including a learner in a study. A teacher in the role of assessor needs to be aware that tests are only tools, and not perfect and often do not provide a solution to a problem. At best they provide additional information that should be explored further. The educator should clarify the purpose of the tests, and point out their limitations. The test results should be given to the learner, and their meanings to the learner should be explored. In interpreting the test results, the educator should be tentative and neutral, refraining from judgements as much as possible and allowing the learner to formulate his or her own meanings and conclusions (Corey 2000:55). The meaning of assessment in the school context is discussed next.

### **2.6.2 What is assessment?**

Learner assessment is defined as "the ability to assess the progress as well as the potential and actual learning through using a variety of assessment procedures (instrument for developmental appraisal, criteria 1.5 in Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998). Whereas, National Curriculum Statement General Education and Training Assessment Guidelines for Languages (Intermediate and Senior Phase) define assessment as a process of making decisions about a learner's performance. Furthermore, National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for Schools in the

General Education and Training band point out that the educator must have the ability to use the results of learner performance for diagnostic purpose, and remedial work.

### **2.6.3 Assessment of reading and spelling**

Jacobs, Vakalisa, and Gawe (2004:89) suggest that an educator should inform learners about the purpose of the assessment for example, the teacher should tell learners that they are going to write a dictation test to see if the learners still remember their school work after the long school holiday. The purpose of the assessment is to test the ability of the learners to demonstrate a spelling and reading skill in a manner that involves understanding and truthfulness (Jacobs, et al 2004:89). The results of the assessment, dictation test, will inform both the learners and the educator with a vivid awareness of the priorities on which learners have to concentrate (Jacobs et al. 2004:90). For example, the learners who did not write phonologically accepted spelling, will be further tested on letter recognition.

Donald and Condy (2005:8) developed a sequence of dictation tests passages appropriate to Grades 3 to7 to “measure accuracy of written language”. The test is thus a measure of early writing skills. However, it is also reasonable to assume that most words that a learner can write (spelt correctly or “recognisably”) he or she can also read. This would also make the test a good predictor of early reading skills. A learner’s result might reveal that a learner has a phonological problem when he or she spells some words correctly.

Wicks-Nelson and Israel (2003:268) define phonological disorder as mis-production of speech sounds. The child makes incorrect speech sounds substitute sounds for more difficult ones, or omits sounds. The broader problem in the child’s understanding of the sound structure of the language (Snowling, Bishop, & Stothard, 2001; Whitehurst & Fischel, 1994; in Wicks-Nelson & Israel 2003:268) is manifested in an inability to identify the multiple sounds in a word.

Furthermore, Harley and Wedekind (2003:26) point out that “the progressivist theoretical and pedagogical model underpinning the new curriculum has a number of

consequences for teachers and learners”. The emphasis on the concept of the teacher as a facilitator, “the guide on the side rather than the sage on the stage”, signals a radical shift in identity for the majority of South African teachers; is one of the number of reading problems consequences for teachers and learners (Moore & Hart 2007:16).

Macdonald (2002) in Moore and Hart (2007:17) illustrates the confusing signals of Curriculum 2005 by pointing out that in designing the new curriculum the process of early literacy were effectively ignored as the impact of this curriculum change on learners’ literacy development is manifested in a number of ways. At a training workshop in the Eastern Cape Foundation Phase teachers (Curriculum 2005 Workshop held in 2004) were told that learners can learn to read and write by themselves. You don’t have to explicitly teach this-they will pick this up incidentally (Macdonald, 2002:13). The President’s Education Initiative (PEI) research (1999) Moore and Hart (2007:17) found very little extended writing happening in classrooms they observed and books are rarely used. The PEI studies found that children sat in groups and talked about their everyday experiences, often with little or no conceptual content or direction to this activity (Taylor, 2001:6).

Moore and Hart (2007:18) point out the consequences of the above practices as practices that severely undermine learners’ literacy development as confirmed by research on literacy levels at all levels of the school system”. Strauss (1995) in Moore and Hart (2007:18) found Grade 6 English second language learners (ESL) reading at less than 30% comprehension level with similar results found in Learners Assessment Studies of literacy levels of grade 3 and 6 undertaken by Western Cape Education Department (WCED) in Moore and Hart ( 2007:18).

In secondary school the READ Annual Report (1999) indicated that Grade 8 ESL learners in rural areas with an average age of 14.4 were reading at age 7.6. At tertiary level, Webb (1999) found that many first year ESL students were reading at grade 8 level. Pretorius (2000) in Moore and Hart (2007:18) reported first year Psychology and Sociology students at UNISA read with 53% comprehension. Therefore, it is important for the educator to assess learners’ word knowledge at the Intermediate Phase when reading can still be improved without too much difficulty.

## **2.7 WORD KNOWLEDGE**

Several researchers agree that their empirical findings support systematic, explicit phonics instruction in early instruction to ensure that children become fluent readers (Adams 1990, Chall 1983, National Reading Panel [NRP] 2000, Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998 & Stanovich 2000 in Montgomery & Hayes 2005:89).

Early readers at any age require systematic instruction in word identification that provides opportunities to practice their growing knowledge of words while reading connected text at instructional reading levels. Stahl et al. (1998) in Montgomery and Hayes (2005:89) contended that it is equally important for children to investigate words in isolation so that they can examine the patterns without the distractions of the text.

Zutell, (1998); in Montgomery and Hayes (2005:89) adds that “word study requires learners to compare words on the basis of similarities and differences through a procedure called word sorting. Word sorting is a conceptual process requiring children to recognize and use the similarities and differences among words through comparisons”. For example, words such as “whole number” and “whale” have the similarities in the first sound “wh” and the differences in the last sounds “-ole” and “-ale”. This procedure leads to greater spelling control and word recognition. Sorting can be accompanied by recording word sorts in learners’ word notebooks and by searching related words in previously read texts to make contextual connections.

## **2.8 TEACHING PHONEMIC AWARENESS**

Shore and Sabatini (2009:4) defines phonological awareness as “the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken and written words”. Therefore, phonemic awareness is the ability to recognise that words are made of component sounds. For example, in the following words: song, long, pain, and wrong, the sound unit (or phoneme) common to these three words is /-ng/; the word that lacks a sound is “pain” (Mayer 2003:32). In addition, the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Department of Education) describes phonemic



awareness as the ability to distinguish between the separate sounds of the language. For example, in English to identify the same sound in bad, sad, glad, and mad; the same sound (phoneme) common to the four words is /-ad/ ; and the learner should distinguish between the sounds in bed, bad, bud and bird. Educators may use similar tasks to teach phonological awareness. Phonemic awareness is necessary for development of good reading skills (Shore & Sabatini 2009:4).

When Bradley and Bryant (1978) in Mayer (2003:32) used the above similar tasks to evaluate learners' ability to recognise sounds unit in words, they found that good readers were successful but that poor readers were not. It thus appears that an important process in reading is recognizing the separate phonemes that make up words as separate sound units (Mayer 2003:32).

What are the sounds in "cat"? What word is /s/ /k/ /u/ // ///? What is "smile" without the /s/? All are examples Intermediate Phase educators can use to teach and assess phonemic awareness skills (referred to respectively as phoneme segmentation, phoneme blending, and phoneme deletion). Learners are classified as phonologically aware if they are able to break a word such as "cat" into three constituent sounds, /c/ /a/ /t/; to combine the /s/ /k/ /u/ // // sounds to create the spoken word "skull" and to say "mile" when asked to delete the /s/ sound from "smile" (Mayer 2003:38). Implications for instruction in phonemic awareness training is that without special training, learners with poor phonemic awareness appear disadvantaged in learning to read and write (Mayer 2003:41).

Similarly, Stanovich (1986:364) indicates the following: "Educators may be initiating a causal chain of escalating negative side effects if they fail to provide phonemic awareness instruction to beginning readers with poor phonological skills". The negative effects begin when learners with poor phonological skills have more difficulty in learning to read words. Learners who lack phonemic awareness skills tend to omit letters, add incorrect letters, and reverse letters when spelling words. On the other hand, when a learner read aloud he or she might mispronounce a word, substitute a word with the one he or she knows, move lips without uttering any sound and lastly just become silent.

## 2.9 TEACHING THE LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET

Neal and Ehler (2007:244) point out that the educator should make note whether the letter is upper- or lower-case. Thus, a learner may not “know” the difference between “E” and “e” and when or where to use them.

Seng, Parsons, Hinson and Sardo-Brown (2003:243) claim that information is something that learners get when some person, educator or parent, tells the learners the letters of the alphabet, for example, they did not know before. It is imperative for the educator to know that information progresses through the system in a series of stages one step at a time (Matlin 2002:10). The information moves from sensory memory to working memory (Krause, Bochner, Duchesne and McMaugh 2010:201).

Krause (2010:202) and Matlin (2002:10) both agree that new information is stored in the sensory memory for less than two seconds. It is important for the educators to realise that sensory memories extinguish extremely quickly (about half a second for visual information and approximately three seconds for auditory information (Krause et al., 2010:202). In that time learners must identify, sequence, and understand the letters of alphabet they did not know or they will be gone forever (Krause et al., 2010:202). The Intermediate Phase educators should give learners various interesting activities that will enable them to repeat two or three letters that were taught for a day.

The reason why some learners do not to know all the letters of the alphabet is because most of the time the letters of the alphabet are presented visually, using cards or writing them on the board. Therefore, it is crucial that the educators allow the learners to view the letters long enough (i.e one letter be given at least a minute) and read aloud that letter with the educator for it to be able to be moved to the next stage, working memory.

According to Matlin (2002:80) and Krause et al. (2010:202) “the working memory is a temporary storage place with a limited capacity to store approximately seven items of information or letters at a time”. Some learners may only learn eight written letters of the alphabet from the first grade to the fifth grade. Seng et al., (2003:245)

emphasise that “to keep the letters of the alphabet activated in working memory especially visual memory a learner has to repeat those letters in his or her mind”.

The educator can select the letter to be learned from the letters that a learner does not know, stating the letter’s name as it is presented (e.g., “Today we are going to work on a really important letter. This is the letter “D”, and it starts all kinds of words like dog and duck and door and dippy-doodle, and lots of other words that we say every day”). The educator may ask the learner to tell him or her, another word that begins with the letter “D” (Neal & Ehler 2007:245).

Seng et al., (2003:246) point out that “rehearsal and elaboration appear to be invaluable in facilitating learners’ efforts to enter letters of alphabet into long-term storage”. For example, the educator can present the learner with the letter recognition page that contains the letter that is being learned for that day. The learner can find more of the letter of the day “Ds” on this page. No other letter will be stated by the educator except the selected daily letter (Neal & Ehler 2007:245).

Neal and Ehler (2007:245) advise the following writing activity as a way of reinforcement: “the learner should be provided with a pencil and have him/her to encircle ONLY the Ds on the work page”. The learner should be taught to say the letter as it is being marked, such as, “Here is a D...and here is another D...I found another D...” This provides the learner with both a visual stimulus as well as an auditory counterpart to that which is being seen on the page”. The educator should allow the learner to take the complete page home so that the parent can help to reinforce the knowledge he or she gained.

## **2.10 SUMMARY**

The role of the Intermediate Phase educator was to assess whether the learner can write all the letters of the alphabet in the correct order without reversing nor repeating or omitting others. When a learner reverses or omits letters he or she cannot build a good foundation for reading skills and spelling words correctly. Words are made up of individual sounds.

An Intermediate phase learner is expected to know how the sounds in words work. The role of the educator in this study was to assess whether a learner was able to identify and segment individual sounds in written single words. When a learner is able to identify and segment sounds in written single words, he or she has phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness plays an important role in the ability to map letters to phonemes or sounds when writing single words. Spelling requires that a learner produce in written form the correct sequence of letters that form a particular word. A learner who experiences spelling deficits will have difficulty in recognising words.

The role of the Intermediate Phase educator was to use a reading aloud assessment activity to identify a learner who is slow, hesitant, makes errors in word identification and pause frequently to sound out words". Chapter three, research design, enables the educator to collect data on learner's phonological awareness, letter recognition and word recognition skills.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of the Intermediate Phase educator in the identification of learners with reading problems. The answers to the research questions might provide information that will help the educator to identify learners with reading problems. Therefore a research design is needed to ‘provide, within an appropriate mode of inquiry, the most valid, accurate answers possible to research questions’ (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:31).

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:31) describe a research design as follows: “The procedure for conducting the study, including when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained”. There are two types of research designs, namely qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative research design will be followed and discussed in the rationale section.

The research methodology is discussed, and includes reference to the following areas: (2) rationale for research approach, (3) research method, (4) processing, (5) data analysis, (6) ethical considerations, (7) mechanically recorded data, (8) negative findings and (10) limitations of the study. The chapter culminates with a brief concluding summary (Bloomberg & Volpe 2008:79).

#### **3.2 RATIONALE FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH**

Most of the studies on identifying learners with reading problems are quantitative in nature. Hugo, le Roux, Muller and Nel (2005:220) performed statistical analysis to establish whether elements of phonological awareness could be used to predict reading success and found the following: “With a significant correlation of 0,5 the composite phonological awareness variable seemed to be the most likely predictor of reading success”.

There are no direct studies on the identification of learners with reading problems that are qualitative in nature. The related study that is qualitative in nature is that of Ziolkowska (2007:76): “The purpose of this study was to explore the process of how one classroom teacher, in the role of a teacher researcher, worked with struggling first grade students”.

The example of a face to face interaction in the classroom context is illustrated in the study by Ehlert (2007:243) suggesting that a teacher should sit opposite a learner with reading problems, when assessing a learner’s ability to identify all the letters of the alphabet. Ehlert (2007:243) found that: “Many learners with reading problems encounter failure and frustration when presented with correctly identifying all the letters of the alphabet”. The researcher, as an educator in this study will also have a face to face interaction in the classroom context to observe and collect data on learners with reading problems.

Against the above background, it is proposed that the present study be conducted within the interpretative paradigm and according to qualitative research method. The qualitative paradigm has several characteristics (Kruger 2010:52; Maritz & Visagie 2010:9). The characteristics of the qualitative paradigm used in this study are the researcher as an instrument, unknown variables, holistic, emergent methods, iterative, triangulation, and ethical considerations. These characteristics are discussed below.

The qualitative research method requires of the researcher to become the research instrument (Maritz & Visagie 2010:9). McMillan and Schumacher (2001:396) explain the role of the qualitative researcher as being “immersed in the situation and the phenomenon studied”. After only one participant was selected according to the selection criteria, I had face to face interaction with the selected participant in the form of an interview. Once the participant was selected I decided on a case study design as the participant’s behaviour could be observed and data collected, while the researcher had “an ethical obligation to observe behaviour” (Maritz & Visagie 2010:9). The case study followed a discourse between observation, a linguistic analysis to make sense of the participant's reading and writing comprehension, as

well as the narrative according to the meaning it had for the participant (Rule & John 2011)

The qualitative paradigm “has unknown variables [phonological awareness, letters of the alphabet, spelling and word recognition], for which relevant variables [learner(s) who experience reading problems] have yet to be identified” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont 2003:81). The role of the Intermediate Phase educator was to identify the above unknown variables in a larger picture (holistic process) of the Intermediate Phase group, and then selected one participant for this study.

The larger picture refers to the population into which the case study fell and in this study it were the identified classes: grades four A, five B and six C. The identified classes' level was considered by the school to be below average. The school used the final year class schedules results to identify the classes. The purpose of the study was regarding the role of the educator to use various reading activities to be able to identify learners with reading problems and then to identify one participant to continue as the case study for in-depth assessment.

De Vos et al. (2003:81) describe the unit of analysis that is holistic as “concentrating on the relationship between elements”. The elements in this study were the reading activities administered to all the learners in the selected classes. The results of the reading activities determined the number of the participants in this study. One grade four learner was identified as the participant in this study. The answers to the reading activities directed the inductive method in this study to explore, analyse and describe data as it emerges.

The qualitative research has emergent methods and is iterative, that was because I had to move back and forth between data collection and analyses to understand the narrative of the participant: “Data collection is adjusted according to what is learned” (Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest & Namey 2005:3). This study used several kinds of data collection approaches. Creswell (2008:238) claims: “There is no single accepted approach to analyse qualitative data as it is an eclectic process”.

### **3.3 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research constitutes an in-depth study investigation into the reading abilities of a learner in the Intermediate Phase. The research design will develop from an interpretative phenomenological view to select one participant from a group of learners who possibly experienced reading problems. A case study method will be followed to interpret, understand and support one learner with reading problems. A procedure or method is needed to assess a learner with reading problems.

What are the procedures needed to assess reading and spelling skills of the Intermediate Phase learner?

- What assessment procedure/ method can the intermediate Phase educator use to assess sequencing of least thirteen letters of the alphabet?
- What assessment procedure/ method can the Intermediate Phase educator use to assess learner's phonological awareness skills in English?
- What assessment procedure/ method can the Intermediate Phase educator use to assess a learner's spelling ability?
- What assessment procedure/ method can the Intermediate Phase educator use to assess a learner's ability to recognise mathematical high frequency words?

#### **3.3.1 Design**

Bromely (1990:302) defines a case study research as "a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest". Yin (2003) in Rule and John (2011:30) describe a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between boundaries and context are not clearly evident".



### **3.3.2 Setting and subjects**

The setting was one South African public Primary School, Boitirelo in the North West Province. The study was conducted in two phases, where phase one, the preliminary participants, were a group of learners from three classes in the Intermediate Phase: Class A, consisting of 40 grade four learners; class B, consisting of 44 grade five learners and class C of 36 grade six learners. The pre- and post – test results revealed that one learner in grade six and another in grade five did not perform well in two reading activities. One learner in grade four did not perform well in almost all the four reading activities. In phase two - one grade four learner was identified and was selected to become the only participant of the case study. By the restriction of the dissertation of limited scope it was decided to describe only one participant.

The learners in the Intermediate Phase use Setswana as their first language and English as the second language and also as language of teaching and learning (LOLT).

### **3.3.3 Entry into the field**

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:432) state that contact should be made with a person who can grant permission for the research. In this study, the district manager of the North West Department of Education in Dr Kenneth Kaunda District and the principal of the school were contacted by the researcher to grant the written permission to conduct the research (see annexures). The measuring instruments for assessment of the subjects are discussed in the next section.

### **3.3.4 Measures**

As part of the selection process, the researcher, as also an educator, designed four reading activities as the baseline assessments for class A, B, and C. The first reading activity was based on writing the letters of the alphabet in the correct order. The set criteria, was to write correctly at least the first thirteen letters because “learners need letter knowledge in order to be readers, and letter knowledge is a strong predictor of reading success” (Langernberg 2000).

The second reading activity was based on phonemic awareness because “learners with phonological deficits have difficulty in naming words” (Wicks-Nelson & Israel 2003:273). The participants were assessed on the ability to segment the first five of the ten mathematical concepts used in the baseline assessment as a dictation test. The mathematical concepts were selected because learners are expected to be able to read instructions and questions independently which often contain most of the selected concepts. The third activity was to blend the segmented concepts in order to spell the very same five concepts. Spelling is “a tool used in language expression” (Richards 2001:1) and only once learners who understand a word sum correctly will be able to answer it. Consequently, poor spelling and reading levels have a negative effect on learners’ mathematics performance. The last activity was to read aloud the very same concepts in isolation to assess the word recognition skill of the participants.

### **3.3.5 Procedure**

During the selection process, all the learners in classes A, B, and C wrote for example, the following concepts: whole numbers, fractions, number sentences, perimeter, etc.

The learners’ performance in class A (grade four) and B (grade five) was not good. Most of the learners could not spell the concepts in a phonological acceptable manner. The researcher provided phonemic awareness instruction on the very same concepts in order to improve the way the learners spell these concepts.

The phonemic instruction was based on the segmentation of the first five mathematical concepts. After phonemic instruction, the very same concepts were dictated to class A and B. The majority of learners except the selected participant in this study spelled the five concepts correctly.

During the writing of the letters of the alphabet as the second activity all the learners in class A and B except the selected participant (from now on Learner A) in this study were able to separate the upper and lower case letters in a correct order. Therefore,

Learner A, a twelve year old grade four boy who was unable to write the letters of the alphabet and spell correctly was selected as the participant in this study. According to Rule and John (2011:64) “People selected as participants are deliberately chosen because of their suitability in advancing the purpose of the research”. Learner A is a 12 year old boy who repeated grades one and two and as a result he was promoted to grade three and again to grade four due to age. According to Ziolkowska (2007:76) this is called social promotion which is “the practice of passing learners to the next grade with their peers”.

During the assessment of the reading activities conducted in his grade four class with other learners in this study, he was unable to spell all the concepts correctly in the pre- and post tests. For example, he spelled the concept *whole number* as Wolnuabas, *fraction* as wonene, *round off* as Radi off, *flow diagram* as fol bara and *number sentences* as Nuabanasenbences. In the phonemic awareness activity, after intervention, indicating that there was no time delay between the modelled concepts and segmenting activity, he was unable to segment the concepts correctly. The first concept was segmented as Who/le naba/s, the second concept as fa/cene/s, the third concept as fl/or/ns Do/oni and the last concept as Nua/bana Sen/tencens. The results of the alphabet assessment revealed that he managed to write in the correct order the first six letters of the alphabet. After the sixth letter he sequenced his letters as j, k, a, j, k, m, ng, o, p, w, r, s and t. Nevertheless, the participant was able to recognise three concepts out five concepts from their grade four mathematics textbook.

### **3.3.6 Analysis**

Maree (2007:100) states that “data collection, processing, analysis, and reporting are intertwined”. These factors are discussed next.

#### **3.3.6.1 Data collection**

Different methods of data collection employed in this study were interviews, participant observation, document study, and multi-method assessment strategies. “Case study researchers employ a variety of data collection methods that are

determined more by factors such as purpose of study, the key research factors, research ethics and resource constraints than by factors inherent to case study research” (Rule & John 2011:61).

### 3.3.6.2 The interview

Individual interviews, are the most widely used data collection strategy in qualitative research (Sandelowski, Nunkoosing, in Lambert & Loiselle 2008:229; Drew, Hardman & Hosp 2008:189). The aim of the interview is to obtain rich descriptive data that will help the researcher to understand Learner’s A construction of reading skills. The semi-structured interview as the central method of data collection in this study, was used which required Learner A to answer a set of predetermined and open-ended questions (Maree 2007:87). A set of field questions guided the research, followed by further questions that improved the depth of the interview (Rule & John 2011:65).

Turner (2010:757) cautioned how important it is to be prepared for an interview: “The preparation for the interview can help make or break the process and can either alleviate or exacerbate the problematic circumstances that could potentially occur once the research is implemented”. Before the interview took place the researcher informed Learner A about the aim (to find out about the participant’s reading experiences) of the interview, the date, duration (30 minutes) of the interview, and the place (the educator’s classroom) of the interview four days before the interview.

Learner A granted the researcher the permission verbally to conduct the interview. The researcher interviewed Learner A in the school where the learner attends. The responses were recorded both in tape recorder and the interview guide (McNamara 2009). “Data should be recorded on the interview guide in a form of notes in case something goes wrong with the tape recorder” (Drew et al 2008:194). I used the interview guide to conduct the interview. Although the process of note taking is very accurate, “it does leave room for disputation if only one person is in the room in addition to the respondent” (Drew et al 2008:194). The researcher and Learner A in this study were the only ones in the interview room. Observation notes help the researcher to gain a deeper insight and understanding of Learner A’s reading skills.

### 3.3.6.3 Participant observation

De Vos et al. (2003:285) explain that “in participant observation the gathering of data boils down to the actual observation and taking of field notes. The researcher used the participant observation method to observe (listen when the participant read aloud the words he wrote and look at the spelling of the words that Learner A wrote), and record the observations. Drew et al. (2008:195) clarify that “observation provides a direct method for the researchers to record human behaviour and events as they occur- by watching”. The researcher recorded the reactions of Learner A when he read mathematical concepts in the study, and observed that there is a missing letter in the homework word (*hw*) selected by the participant. The researcher used a template to record her observations. Document analysis is where you study different written documents produced by the subject such as class work, homework, assignments, tests or examination samples. Some of these include observations made of the learner by the educator

### 3.3.6.4 Document study

Learner’s A written work samples from the school serve as “written communications that may shed light” (Maree 2007:82) on the Learner’s A reading experience. It is essential to corroborate the data that the researcher collected. Drew et al. (2008:198) point out that “in all literate societies, written records exist in archival form”. De Vos et al. (2003:324) define “archival records as the material that comprises documents and data preserved in archives for research purposes”. By reviewing these records, “the qualitative researcher can tap the history of the subject that is central to the research” (Drew et al 2008:198). These records include Learner’s A samples of written work. One of the examples of Learner’s A samples of written work was the dictation test written on 4 August 2010, in grade four found in the appendix section.

Drew et al. (2008:198) state that “when examining existing records, it is important to remember that the individual or individuals who did the initial recording (samples of learners written work) had their own perspectives and biases and those of the participant’s interest”.

### 3.3.6.5 Multi-method strategies

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:248) recommend the multi-method strategies to be used to collect and corroborate data obtained. For this study data were collected from individual interview, participant observation, and document study utilised in this study. The discussions with the grade one and two educators revealed that the participant experienced difficulties in learning the letters of the alphabet. Consequently, the participant could not copy nor read written words. The major problem the participant had was omitting some letters of a word even when copying from the chalkboard. Gillet, Temple and Crawford (2004:40) confirm that “to be a good reader, a learner has to be good at recognising words”.

Information from informal conversations (the scheduled interview format in the appendix section) revealed that the parent was aware of her child’s reading problem: “I want my child to be like other children”. The parent had very high expectations for her child and could not come to grips with her child’s reading problem (Kriegler, Van Niekerk, in Lessing & Odendaal 2004:185). This expectation motivated the parent to help her child with school work, especially reading.

The parent indicated that she tried several ways to help her child to read, but without progress. The parent explained that she read several books daily with her child: The parent read first, to model how to read whilst her child watching and listening to what was read to him. Then the parent gave her child a chance to repeat what was read. The child could only read the first two words in a sentence. This process of reading where the parent and her child were engaged in is called paired reading (Lessing & Odendaal 2004:186).

## 3.4 PROCESSING

The researcher coded data by reading carefully through her transcribed data line by line and divided it into meaningful analytic units (Maree 2007:105). The researcher used a set of existing codes in her data which are called a *priori* codes. *Priori* codes were identified from the literature review seeking to test existing theories or expand

on them (Maree 2007:107). Processes such as enumeration, categorisation and searching for relationships and patterns in the data were used to summarise the results in this study (Maree 2007:107). Enumeration was helpful in clarifying the number of the letters of the alphabet that the participant knew. Categories were established by using a priori coding.

The categories that will bring understanding of the reading problems in this study were the following activities: writing the letters of the alphabet, segmenting mathematical concepts, writing the spelling test, and word recognition activity. Data needs to be analysed.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:461) define qualitative data analysis as “an inductive process of organising the data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among the categories. Most categories and patterns emerge from the data”. The categories were the reading activities. The reading activities were based on the alphabet, phoneme segmentation, spelling and isolated word recognition. These activities were derived from the research questions.

Data will be analysed by using the interview transcript, field notes from the participant observation, document study, discussions with the Foundation Phase educators and the parent. Data will be presented in table and quotations.

Content analysis was used in this study to analyse qualitative responses to an interview where the researcher look for similarities and differences in text that will corroborate or disconfirm theory from the literature review (Maree 2007:101). It is of utmost importance for the researcher to take into account the ethical considerations as indicated in the following paragraph.

### **3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Learner A was involved in this study therefore the researcher obtained permission from the district manager of the NWDoE (North West Department of Education), the

school principal and the parent (single mother) before conducting her research (Maree 2007:300). (See annexuresf).

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:420), “ethical guidelines include, but (are) not limited to, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity”. Informed consent can be regarded as a dialogue where each new participant in the study is informed of the purpose and is assured of confidentiality and anonymity (Smith, 1990 in McMillan & Schumacher 2001:421).

### **3.6.1 Informed consent**

Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, and Namey (2005:9) define informed consent as a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so that they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate.

Learner A in this study is a child. Therefore, protection of vulnerable individuals (e.g. children, mentally disabled or economically disadvantaged, the aged, prisoners, psychiatric patients, and so on) is one of the criteria for ethical approval Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) in Kruger (2010:34); Mouton (2004:245). As children are more vulnerable, and may not understand the meaning of informed consent, studies using children as participants, present problems for researchers. Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) in Kruger (2010:35) present the following guidelines that researchers need to consider: “Informed consent from the parents or legally designated caretakers is required for all participants defined as minors; researchers should not report information given by a child in confidence; and, never pressurise a child into participation in a study”. Written consent means that a person receives a written form that describes the research and then signs that form to document his or her consent to participate (Mack et al. 2005:11). The parent received a written form provided in English language at an educational level that she and the witness could understand (Mack et al 2005:11). (See annexures) indicating informed consent). Confidentiality and anonymity is discussed next.



### **3.6.2 Confidentiality and anonymity**

Mouton (2004:243) points out that, informants have a right to remain anonymous: “This right should be respected both where it has been promised explicitly. The conditions of anonymity apply to the collection of data by means of tape recorders and other data gathering devices, as well as the data collected in face-to-face interviews or participant observations”.

The researcher utilised a tape recording to capture the content of interviews. Mouton (2004:243) warns that “those being studied should understand the workings of tape recordings and should be free to reject them if they so wish. If they accept them, the results obtained should be in harmony with the informant’s right to welfare, dignity and privacy”. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:421) point out that “researchers routinely code names of people as a way of protecting the participants from the general reading public”.

Whereas Mouton (2004:244) argues that the principle of confidentiality refers to “the information gathered from the subjects”. Maree (2007:301) gives an example: “All participant’s information and responses shared during the study will be kept private and the results will be presented in an anonymous manner in order to protect the identity of the participant”.

### **3.7 MECHANICALLY RECORDED DATA**

Tape recorder may enhance validity in this study by providing an accurate and relatively complete record. However, the data was not usable due to situational aspect that affected the data recorded. The situational aspect was “the distance of the taping” (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:410) that had an effect on the quality when gathering recorded data.

### **3.8 NEGATIVE FINDINGS**

Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:77) point out that searching for variations in the understanding of the phenomenon entails “seeking instances that might disconfirm or

challenge the researcher's expectations or emergent findings". The contradictory information is that the participant was able to read the first concept "whole number" correctly. The researcher was unable to find out which strategy did the learner use to recognise the word "whole number" amongst form recognition, phonetic composition, or analysis of structure.

### **3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

I have used different data gathering methods to make my study trustworthy, valid and reliable. Drew et al. (2008:198) confirm the importance of triangulation and other steps to defend against the threats to validity cannot be stressed enough" (Drew et al. 2008:198). Babbie and Mouton (2001:285-286) in De Vos et al. (2003:324) states that reliability and validity of documents (the participant's sample of written work) can be done by comparing them with other data collected in other ways", for example, findings from the individual interview, participant observation, and multi-method strategies such as the interview transcript revealed that Learner A could only write in the correct order only the first eight letters of the alphabet. The summary of the discussion with the former Learner A grade two educator corroborated that Learner A could only learn the first five letters of the alphabet in grade two for the entire year.

### **3.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The results of this study will not be generalised to all other settings; but it is likely that the lessons learned in one setting might be useful to others. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:78) argue that "the reader might possibly decide whether similar processes will be at work in their own settings by understanding in depth how they occur at the research site".

De Vos et al. (2003:342) affirm that in many studies, "one researcher conducts interviews or is the sole observer of people's behaviour". In this study, for example, one researcher conducted interviews. "A single person means the limitations of the one observer become the limitation of the study" (De Vos et al. 2003:342). On the other hand, multiple observers or researchers add alternative perspectives and will

reduce the limitations. “Combining data from a variety of observers is more likely to yield a more complete picture of the” (De Vos et al 2003:342) participant’s reading problem. The multiple observers in this study were the Foundation Phase educators, four educators from the Intermediate Phase with whom I consulted regarding observations and interpretations of my journal. The participant could not be heard in the tape due to the distance of the taping.

### **3.11 SUMMARY**

This study described the use of the qualitative approach that consisted of two approaches. Firstly, the pre- assessment of the three classes then the identification of a single learner, which required a single case study design to be applied. The researcher was granted permission by the North West Department of Education (Dr Kenneth Kaunda) district manager, the head of the sampled institution and the parent of Learner A to conduct the research.

Learner A was a grade four learner who is now in grade five due to conditional transfer. The methods of data collection that were used were: individual interviews as the primary data collection method, participant observation, document study, and multi-method strategies.

Content analysis was used to analyse data in this study. Ethical guidelines were adhered to in this study. The essential strategies used to insure validity design are the individual interview, participant observation, document study and multi-method strategies.

Finally, the conditions that weakened the study were the sample and the sole conductor (only one participant and one conductor) of the interview. In Chapter four, I will discuss the findings of the data, according to the research method explained in chapter three.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter documents the results of the researcher's fieldwork. Tables were used to summarise the main results obtained by the researcher (Mouton 2004:124). The researcher discusses "the main trends and patterns in the data with reference to the research questions" (Mouton 2004:124). The research questions that directed the literature study were:

- How can an Intermediate Phase educator assess a learner's ability to write in the correct order at least thirteen letters of the alphabet?
- How can an Intermediate Phase educator determine when a learner is phonologically aware of the language of instruction, English?
- Which assessment method does an Intermediate Phase educator use to assess a learner's spelling ability?
- How can an Intermediate Phase educator assess a learner's ability to recognise mathematical high frequency words?

This chapter concludes by interpreting the main findings. In interpreting the data the researcher would be "searching for emerging patterns, associations, and explanations in the data" (Maree 2007:111). The interpretations of the findings were brought into context with existing theory to bring a new understanding to the identification of learners with reading problems. The main results both positive and negative are highlighted (Mouton 2004:124).

## 4.2 THE RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEW

The questions of the interview schedule are outlined in tables 4.1, 4.2, etc.

**Table 4.1: Pre-school reading experience**

<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Reflection notes and observations</b>
What were you taught at the pre-school?	Reading and drawing	His facial expression expressed joy
What were you reading?	Words such as furniture and animals	
How were you reading those words?	Read, draw, and write the word lion at home	Learner A never talked about the letters of the alphabet. The researcher asked him about whether they were taught alphabet at pre-school, his response was sometimes.

Learner A was not taught how to identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words in pre-school before he learned to read print. Phonemic awareness is defined as “the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words” (Luthy & Stevens 2011:1). He was taught to read words before phonemic segmentation, which resulted in word recognition problems.

### 4.2.1 Letters of the alphabet

Researchers Adams, Bishop, (2003), Hamill, (2004); in Neal and Ehlert (2007:243) affirm that letter recognition has long been regarded as one of the crucial

components of the reading process, and recent studies support the contention that identifying the letters of the alphabet is perhaps the single best predictor of the subsequent reading success for learners.

Treiman, Tincoff and Richmond-Welty, in Lekgoko and Winskel (2008:580) point out that “letter knowledge plays an important role as it helps learners connect print to speech and acquire the alphabetic principle”. By contrast, difficulties learning the letters of the alphabet can lead to later struggles with learning how to read. Table 4.1, Learner A ... [interpret his experience] had sometimes exposure to the letters of the alphabet during his preschool year and from the observations of his facial expression he enjoyed it.

Table 4.2 display the transcript of the interview on the letters of the alphabet.

**Table 4.2: Results of the Letters of the Alphabet**

<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Reflection notes and observations</b>
Recite the letters of the alphabet	A, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z	Showed confidence and was very fast
Give all the letters that are in your name	E, d, w, a, r, d	Showed confidence
Write the letters of the alphabet	First attempt: A, b, c, d, E, f, G, h, p, v, w, s, w; second attempt: A, b, c, d, E, f, G, h, p, y, w, x, u, z, M, N, O, R, I.	Showed reluctance and sadness; the researcher and the participant went outside to create a conducive environment. It took him five minutes to write the letters

Identifying the letters of the alphabet is perhaps the single best predictor of the subsequent reading success for learners. Learner A was able to identify orally the letters of the alphabet which proves that he was only taught to memorise the letters of the alphabet orally. His sample of the written letters (in the table 4.2) of the alphabet serve as an evidence that Learner A could not connect print to speech which led to later (grade four) struggles with learning how to read.

#### 4.2.2 Phonemic segmentation

Lekgoko and Winskel (2008:58) regard one of the critical skills in the acquisition of reading as “phonological awareness, - (and) the learner’s awareness that spoken words can be broken down into units of sound”. Oudeans (2003:271) agree that “the ability to access the sound structure of a word by segmenting it into individual phonemes has been identified as a strong predictor of successful beginning reading acquisition and a necessary prerequisite for learning to read”.

The researcher tested the participant’s phonological awareness by giving the participant a chance to segment the following concepts: whole numbers, fractions, perimeter, rounding off, and number sentence.

In phoneme segmentation, the participant was instructed to generate the initial, medial, and final phoneme within the above concepts (Nelson, Benner & Gonzalez 2005:7). The results of the participant’s phonemic segmentation are found in table 4.3 below.

**Table 4.3: Phonemic Segmentation Results**

Researcher	Participant	Observations
Whole number	Wh/ole nmb/ers	Showed confidence in segmenting all the concepts
Perimeter	Perim/eter	
Rounding off	Roun/ding off/f	
Number sentence	Num/ber sente/nce	

Do you have any questions regarding separating sounds within a word?	No	
What do you want to know more about reading?	I want to know how to read	Eyes filled with tears
Assured Learner A to assist in practicing to read one word (chosen by Learner A) at a time at home then give feedback the next day?	Yes	Excited

The results in table 4.3 indicate that Learner A struggled to access the correct sound structures of the mathematical concepts when segmenting them. Oudeans (2003:271) agree that “the ability to access the sound structure of a word by segmenting it into individual phonemes has been identified as a strong predictor of successful beginning reading acquisition and a necessary prerequisite for learning to read”. Learner A had no successful initial reading support towards acquisition of basic reading skills which is a necessary prerequisite for learning to read.

#### **4.2.3 Word recognition**

Dela (1994:24) describes “word recognition as the ability to recognise words through form recognition, phonetic composition or analysis of word structure”. Singh (2009:98) add that “word recognition is a requirement for the reading action. Once learners can recognise words, they can read”. The researcher showed the participant the concepts one by one and asked the participant to read aloud. The responses of the participant are recorded in table 4.4 below.



**Table 4.4: Word Recognition Results**

<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Reflection notes and observations</b>
Whole number	Whole number	Confident
Perimeter	No response	
Rounding off	Off	
Fractions	Moved lips without uttering sound	Struggled to pronounce
Number sentences	Ub	
What is the first letter in the concept “whole number”	Y	Hesitantly
What letter is at the beginning of the concept “whole number”	W	

Problems in reading occur when a learner is not able to recognise words (Dela 1994:134). According to Singh (2009:98) “word recognition is a requirement for the reading action.” Learner A managed to recognise one word out of five words in table 4.4. The results in table 4.4 imply that Learner A lacks a crucial requirement for a reading action which might lead to reading problems.

### **4.3 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION RESULTS**

Learner A was able to recognise the first word confidently. He has the ability to remember one word at a time, especially the first word. Learner A was confident when he read the first word. He read the second part of the concept *rounding off*, struggled to pronounce *fractions*. When I asked Learner A to identify the first letter in the concept *whole number* he reluctantly said *y*.

Learner A was aware that he experienced problems in reading single words aloud. The researcher assured Learner A that she will help him to practice reading. Learner A selected words of his choice at home to practice reading.

Learner A and the researcher reached an agreement that Learner A would meet the researcher after lessons to show the researcher the words that he read at home. The researcher gave Learner A an opportunity to read aloud the words he read at home. Learner A's reading aloud results are in table 4.5 below.

**Table 4.5 Participant's Observation Template**

<b>Date and time</b>	<b>Situation</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Actions observed</b>	<b>Reflections</b>
24 May 2011 13:30	Outside researcher's class	Learner A	Learner A read aloud the word "hw" and wrote: "hw"	Researcher: did not show any negative response but encouraged Learner A to read more words at home
25 May 2011 13:45	Inside researchers class	Learner A	Learner A read slowly aloud a three paragraph text in Setswana	Learner A: was eager to feedback, his face was beaming when he read, and said that his mother was impressed with his progress
31 May 2011 14:00	Outside researcher's class	Learner A	Learner A asked for more time to read English	Researcher advised him to read at least one or two words at a

			text, because it's not easy for him to read English	time, and write them to ask for help
--	--	--	--	--

Learner A read aloud the word “how” as “hw”. The researcher supported the participant and did not want to put pressure on the participant to keep on reading, but wanted him to get interested in stories so I suggested that he start writing the words that he could not pronounce so that the researcher can show him how to pronounce written words: The researcher will read aloud one word at a time then invite the participant to join her in order to read together the very same word. The participant will be given an opportunity to read alone the very same word. The researcher will also use the dictionary to give the participant a skill of using the dictionary to find a word (that was read together by the participant and the researcher) and show him how the very same word is written for pronunciation. That was the last time the researcher heard from the participant. The researcher interpreted the participant's behaviour as a sign of reaching a saturation point in the form of the participant observation method of data gathering. However, the researcher's interpretation needed to be verified by gathering further data using other methods of data gathering.

#### **4.4 DOCUMENT STUDY RESULTS**

Learner's A written work samples and the mark schedules from the school serve as written communications that may shed light on his reading experience (Maree 2007:82). Learner's A example of written work sample was his Social Science's remedial work dated 12 February 2010 and re-data handling dated 24 February 2010 (see appendix). The researcher selected five words from the above work found in table 4.6 below.

**Table 4.6 Social Science Remedial Work**

<b>Five words</b>	<b>Learner's A spelling</b>	<b>Observation</b>
Atlas 12 February 2010	Mas ntlas	Social Science educator corrected the spelling, where Learner A added unnecessary letters, probably because of a perception problem
Physical map	Pysica map (12 February 2010) and physico mep (24 February 2010)	Omitted letter "h" in the first physical and omitted letter "l" in the second physical. Map spelled in three different ways in the same work (24 February 2010): mop, map, and mep
Political map	Politieal mat and politieal map (24 February 2010)	Omitted letter "c" in both same word "political and replaced letter "p" for map with letter "t" in the first written political. But the second political he wrote map correctly, this shows inconsistency in spelling map.
Big land	Bip land	Letter reversal: "p" for "g"
Usually, roads and rivers	Usully, rods and rivs	Omission of letters when copying from the chalkboard

The analyses of the participant's errors when copying words from the chalkboard seem random without accurate word recognition analyses. For example, "map, mep, mat" in table 4.6 indicate that the participant has difficulty with word recognition. Matlin (2002:313) states that "readers can recognise a word directly from the printed letters". Words are read letter by letter serially from left to right. You start off by finding the first letter, then the second, and so on until you recognize the word

(Larson 2004). Learner A was able to read correctly the first letter “m” in the word “map” but had problems in reading the second and third letter so that he could have consistency in writing one word the same way three times. Most learners who experience reading failure demonstrate early and persistent problems in learning how to accurately identify printed words (Berg & Stegelman 2003:49).

Document study and multi-method strategies were used as the methods of data gathering to prove that different perspectives could unfold. Existing documents serve as an important resource that complements data obtained directly (Drew, Hardman & Hosp 2008:198). An example of the document study can be found in table 4.7 below.

**Table 4.7: Grade Four Dictation Results**

<b>Dictation test</b>	<b>Participant’s response</b>	<b>Observations</b>
Whole numbers	Hunl namadas	First letter omission, addition of wrong letters and incorrect letter sequencing
Fractions	Fakases	Omitting letters and replacing sounds “ka” for “ction”
Rounding off	Radifo	Replacing of sound: “a” for “ou”, letter omission and incorrect lettter sequencing
Flow diagram	Folobeka	One word instead of two, incorrect letter sequencing, letter reversal “b” for “d”
Number sentences	Nadaseteses	One word instead of two, sound replacement “ada” for “mber”, letter omission, and reversal “d” for “b”.
Rectangle	Redethl	Letter omission and sound replacement: “dethl” for “ctangle” and incorrect letter sequencing

Mass	Mas	Last letter omission
Perimeter	Terimita	Incorrect first letter sound, sound and letter replacement “ta” for “ter”, “i” for “e”
Graph	Raf	First letter omission and sound replacement: “f” for “ph”
Tallies	Talis	Letter omissions

A learner who has no base for his or her spelling decisions is different from an average learner with reading difficulties (Moore & Hart 2007:23). Donald and Condy (2005:8) found that “it is also reasonable to assume that most words that a learner can write (spelt correctly or “recognisably”) he or she can also read. This would also make the test a good predictor of early reading skills”. The mark schedules (official documents) in this study “provided cross-checks on forms of data gathered more directly” (Drew et al. 2008:198).

According to the 2010 final mark schedule the participant was conditionally transferred from grade four to five due to age. “The policy of only allowing a learner to fail once in every phase of schooling enabled the participant to reach grade five without ever passed a year of Foundation Phase” ( Moore & Hart 2007:23). It is apparent that the participant has a history of being conditionally transferred because other mark schedules (official documents) from grade one to three could corroborate conditional transfer. However, mark schedules are kept for only five years in schools after that they are destroyed. Multi-method strategies were used as the methods of data gathering to prove that different perspectives could unfold.

#### **4.5 MULTI-METHOD STRATEGIES RESULTS**

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:248) recommend that multi-method strategies be used to collect and corroborate data obtained, as for example from the individual interview, participant observation, and document study utilised in this study. Table

4.8 below present the summary of the multi-method results gathered from the Foundation Phase educators and the parent of Learner A.

**Table 4.8 Summary of the Multi-method Results**

<b>Person contacted</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Observation</b>
Grade one educator	Learner A experience difficulty in learning vowels as a result he repeated grade one	The educator was convinced that Learner A's difficulty to learn the vowels was the main reason for his reading problems.
Grade two educator	Learner A had difficulty learning all the letters of the alphabet. He managed to learn the first five letters for the entire year. When he copied words from the chalkboard he omitted some letters of a word, as a result he repeated grade two.	The grade two educator was certain that Learner A had reading problems.
The mother to Learner A	When she assisted her child to read at home it emerged that her child could not remember what he had just read which led him to perform poorly at school.	The mother had high expectations for her child as she compared him with other learners "I want my child to be like other children". She spent a lot of time teaching her child to read but without success.

Gillet, Temple, and Crawford (2004:40) confirm that "to be a good reader, a learner has to be good at recognising words".

## **4.6 DISCUSSION OF ASSESSMENT**

The researcher discussed “the main trends and patterns in the data with reference to the research questions” (Mouton 2004:124). The questions that directed the literature found in the introductory section are discussed in the following paragraphs.

### **4.6.1 Assessment of the letters of the alphabet**

The Intermediate Phase educator as a researcher in this study used an interview to assess Learner A’s ability to write in the correct order at least thirteen letters of the alphabet. The interview transcript in Table 4.1 revealed that Learner A could write in the correct order only the first eight letters of the alphabet. The summary of the discussion with the former Learner A’s grade two educator in Table 4.8; corroborated that Learner A could only learn the first five letters of the alphabet in grade two for the entire year. Therefore, the Intermediate Phase educator assumed that Learner A could write in the correct order the first five letters in the Foundation Phase because most of the time you can only write correctly what you are able to read.

### **4.6.2 Phonological awareness assessment**

Learner A segmented five mathematical concepts during an interview with the Intermediate Phase educator. Table 4.3 summarised the way Learner A segmented five mathematical concepts. The summary proved that Learner A could not segment correctly all the five mathematical concepts. He managed to segment correctly only one sound, “wh” in the concept “whole number”.

### **4.6.3 Spelling assessment**

The Intermediate Phase educator used samples of Learner A’s written work in the document study based on the dictation test dated 4 August 2010, the Social Science work dated 12 and 24 February 2010 and the report in participant observation dated 24 May 2011 in Table 4.5 to assess his spelling ability. The dictation test results are summarised in Table 4.7, represent Learner A’s acquired knowledge of spelling



before receiving intervention in this study. Whereas the Social Science work summarised in Table 4.6 represent the remedial work copied from the chalkboard.

The results in Table 4.6 revealed that Learner A omitted letters, added wrong letters, reversed letters and was spelling the same word “map” (map, mep, and mat) inconsistently when copying words from the chalkboard. The results in Table 4.7 showed that Learner A could not spell correctly all the concepts. He omitted letters, added wrong letters, reversed letters, incorrect letter sequencing, wrote two words as one and replaced sounds with his own wrong ones. It was clear that he could not comprehend the meaning of consistency of word spelling. In Table 4.5 Learner A spelled “hw” as a word he read at home. This word “hw” lacks a vowel which can be “o” to form the word “how”.

#### **4.6.4 Word recognition assessment**

During the interview the Intermediate Phase educator showed Learner A each of the five concepts that he segmented after five minutes to read aloud. The aim was to assess Learner A’s ability to recognise mathematical high frequency words. Table 4.4 summarised the word recognition results. Learner A was able to recognise the first concept “whole number”, read the concept “rounding off” as “off”, read the concept “number sentence” as “ub” but could not read other concepts. He only moved his lips (no response) and became quiet for other concepts.

### **4.7 DISCUSSION**

This chapter concludes by interpreting the performance of what Learner A said and done. What significant others (such as his grade 1 and 2 educators and his mother) have said about Learner A’s reading skills. In interpreting the data the researcher would be “searching for emerging patterns, associations, and explanations in the data” (Maree 2007:111). A pattern is a relationship among categories (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:476). The categories in this study were: the letters of the alphabet, phonemic segmentation, spelling and word recognition. What is the relationship among the above categories? The literature study (existing theory) will answer the preceding question.

The interpretations of the findings were brought “into context with existing theory to reveal how they corroborate existing knowledge or bring new understanding” (Maree 2007:111) to the identification of learners with reading problems. The main results both positive and negative were highlighted (Mouton 2004:124).

Content analysis was used in this study to analyse data. Content analysis “is a process of looking at data from different angles” (Maree 2007:101): Learner A’s responses to interview, participant results, document study findings and the discussion of the multi-method strategies with a view to identify patterns that will help to understand and interpret the raw data (Maree 2007:101). The researcher looked for similarities and differences in the data that would corroborate or disconfirm theory. The alphabet is the first category interpreted in the next section.

#### **4.7.1 Difficulty in sequencing written letters of the alphabet**

Bradely and Stahl (2001) emphasise that “letter-name knowledge before formal reading instruction is one of the strongest predictors of children’s reading ability”. Learner A avoided the subject of the letters of the alphabet when he explained the content he was taught in pre-school during the interview. The researcher asked Learner A whether he was taught the letters of the alphabet, his response was: “sometimes”. The implication of Learner A’s response was that he did not receive a good foundation in learning the letters of the alphabet. Trouble learning alphabet is one of the signs of reading disabilities for pre-schoolers. Learning the alphabet is fundamental for learning to read (Bradley & Stahl 2001).

Bradely and Stahl (2001) warn the educators that “they should worry about learners entering second grade without letter knowledge”. The summary of the discussion with the former Learner A’s grade two educator in Table 4.8 corroborated the signs of reading problems: “Learner A could only learn the first five letters of the alphabet instead of the expected twenty six letters in grade two for the entire year”.

Learner A’s assessment of writing the letters of the alphabet in grade five proved that he had fallen behind with writing letters as he wrote in the correct order the first eight letters instead of at least the first thirteen letters. There is no existing theory on

assessing the writing of the letters of the alphabet. Consequently, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge, that learners who experience difficulty in writing the letters of the alphabet in the correct order also experience difficulty in reading. Therefore, the Intermediate Phase educator should timeously identify learners who have trouble in writing the letters of the alphabet in a chronological order to prevent later reading problems.

Neal and Ehlert (2007:243) found that “identifying the letters of the alphabet is perhaps the single best predictor of the subsequent reading success for learners”. In grade five the Intermediate Phase educator expected Learner A to be able to write correctly all the twenty six letters; recognise them in print (written words) and use all the letters of the alphabet to form phonetically accepted words. The researcher’s role was to assess the understanding of Learner A’s letters of the alphabet.

The manner in which Learner A sequenced (in writing) the letters of the alphabet indicated his understanding of the alphabet. First attempt: ‘A, b, c, d, E, f, G, h, p, v, w, s, w; second attempt: A, b, c, d, E, f, G, h, p, y, w, x, u, z, M, N, O, R, l’. Learner A understands the sequence of the first eight letters. Emerging patterns in the written letters in Learner A’s data was that he had omitted letters “i” “j”, “k”, “s”; immediately after letter “h” he wrote letter “p” in both attempts; mixed the upper case and lower case in one list; repeated letter “w” and mixed the sequence of other letters.

Learner A could not associate the letters he recited correctly with the ones he was writing. He knew that there were letters: i, j, k, q, r, t; but do not know how they are written. On the contrary, Learner A uses letter “r” when he writes his name. Smolking and Yaden (1992) study in Deacle (2002:10) discovered that learners associate letters with a name. This study disconfirms Deacle’s finding because Learner A did not associate letter “r” in his name with the letters he wrote because he omitted it twice.

The explanation that the researcher gave for the preceding paragraph was that “both the parent (educator) and Learner A did not use the method of looking and even pointing to the letters at an illustrated sheet, book or chalkboard while they sang the alphabet song together.

Bradely and Stahl (2001) point out that “when the learner did not receive good foundation of the knowledge of the alphabet, he or she will have difficulty with other aspects of reading”. The researcher can conclude that Learner A did not receive quality Foundation Phase exposure and acquired sufficient knowledge of the alphabet. Therefore, the Intermediate Phase educator’s role was to find out whether Learner A experienced difficulties with segmenting words, spelling words correctly and recognising words, as other aspects of reading and the reading process. Letter-name knowledge contributes to “reading by mediating letter-sound knowledge” (Bradely and Stahl 2001).

#### **4.7.2 Inability to segment words**

Nullman (2009:13) refers to phoneme segmentation as “the ability to segment words into the component phonemes”. Table 4.3 illustrates the way Learner A segmented sounds. Sound “wh” was the only correct sound identified by Learner A probably because table 4.1 provides evidence he did not receive training in pre-school to segment and blend sounds.

Dahmer (2010:4) gives the stages in which Learner A should have been trained in pre-school: *middle kindergarten* - segmenting initial and final sound, and *late kindergarten* - segment and blend two and three sounds words. It was important for Learner A that before he began to learn to associate the written form with speech, he had to first learn the sound system of English in pre-school (Pange, Moaka, Bernhardt, and Kamil 2003:6). Furthermore, before Learner A knew to read print, he needed to “become aware of how the sounds in words work” (Luthy & Stevens 2011). This study found that Learner A was not aware of how the sounds worked in words.

Berg and Stegelman (2003:51) found that there is “strong and consistent correlations between preschools children’s levels of phonological knowledge and later reading achievement”. For example, in early studies of the relationship between phonological awareness and reading it was found that “good readers performed consistently better on measures of phonological awareness than do poor readers” (Bradley & Bryant, in Berg and Stegelman 2003:51). Learner A in this study performed poorly on the

measure of phonological awareness, the Intermediate Phase educator may identify him as a poor reader.

Pange, Muaka, Bernhardt and Kamil (2003:8) found that research has shown that there is “a close connection between phoneme segmentation and early reading ability”. Phonemic segmentation is important because “the letters of the alphabet map onto individual sound units. Learners who are better able to identify sounds within words “can more easily map letters onto those sounds” (Pange et al. 2003:9; Dahmer 2010:32). As Learner A was not able to attend to the individual sounds in English, he was more likely not to learn the alphabetic principle. Alphabetic principle refers to how letters map onto phonemes (Pange et al. 2003:9). Learner A’s lack of knowledge of alphabetic principles resulted in his inability to recognize printed words accurately and quickly, as well as to spell words correctly. Learner A’s inability to identify almost all the sounds within mathematical concepts indicated “the potential for reading deficit” (Dahmer 2010:33).

#### **4.7.3 Spelling problems**

Learner A’s lack in phonological awareness skills affected his ability to spell correctly. Tables 4.6 and 4.7 illustrate spelling errors that Learner A made. He omitted letters (usully, rods and rivs) and sounds, added incorrect sounds (redethl for rectangle), and reversed letters (bip land). The phonologically based spelling errors, Richards (2001:22) refer to them as omissions.

Richards (2001:24) outlines other spelling deficits which include:

- *Poor perceptual skills*, Learner A could not perceive correctly the concept “rounding off” - he only perceived the word “off” and omitted “rounding”;
- *Inadequate knowledge of sounds*, for example Learner A wrote the following sounds: “h” for “wh” for the concept “whole numbers” as “hunl namadas”; “fa” for “fra” in fractions as “fakases”;

- *Omissions of letters*, Learner A omitted letters in all the concepts he spelled in the dictation test; for example, he spelled “mass” as “mas”, “graph” as “raf”;
- *Additions of letters*, Learner A added letter “t” for the concept “perimeter” as “terimita”, that is, he used his own letters, for letter “e” he replaced it with “i” and “er” with “a”
- *Incorrect sequence of letters within words*, he wrote “nadaseteses” for “number sentences”, that is, he replaced letters “u” as “a” and “c” as “s”, omitted letters “m” and “n”, and reversed letter “b” as “d”; also;
- *Problems perceiving words accurately* especially when copying from the chalkboard; for example, he copied the word “atlas” as “mas ntlas” in Social Science remedial work in table 4.6 above.

Working with second grade through fourth grade poor readers, McCandliss, Beck, Sendak, and Perfetti (in Vadasy and O’Connor 2011:16) found that “poor learners did not use knowledge of segmenting and letter sounds to spell the interior of words correctly, which suggests a lack of understanding of the alphabetic principle”. A learner who experiences most of the above spelling deficits will have difficulty in recognising words.

#### **4.7.4 Word recognition problems**

Dela (1994:24) describes “word recognition as the ability to recognise words”. Learner A was only able to recognise the first concept “whole number”. The primacy effect might be the reason why the participant was able to read the first concept correctly. Matlin (2002:83) define the primacy effect, “as a better recall for items at the beginning of the list, presumably because early items are rehearsed more frequently than other items”. Singh (2009:98) add that “word recognition is a requirement for the reading action. Once learners can recognise words, they can read”. The role of the Intermediate Phase educator was to further assess that Learner A had the ability to recognise another four concepts in table 4.4.

This study found that Learner A was unable to pronounce certain concepts (“fraction” and “perimeter”) because he had not yet learned the letter-sound correspondences in a word, and did not have a sufficient phonological awareness skill.

The above finding is consistent with that of Bradely and Stahl (2001) which emphasise that “letter-print knowledge before formal reading instruction is one of the strongest predictors of a learner’s reading ability”; because Learner A did not develop letter-print knowledge and was not exposed to letter-print knowledge previously. As a result, he experienced reading difficulties and spelling problems.

Richards (2001:1) argue that “spelling problems can be the results of didactic deficits”. Reading is learned, therefore reading disabilities experienced by Learner A reflect a persistent deficit in training to write the letters of the alphabet, phonological skills, phonics training (teaching of sound and letter relationships, as well as sound and spelling). Vadasy and O’Connor (2011:11) found that learners who had received effective instruction in a combination of phoneme awareness plus letter manipulation outscored other groups in spelling and reading.

Furthermore, the above finding is consistent with that of Grossen (1997:3) who found that “learners who are not phonemically aware are not able to segment words into phonemes. Consequently, they do not develop the ability to decode single words, an inability that is the distinguishing characteristic of persons with reading disabilities”.

Stahl and Mckenna (2000:6) concur with the above findings that “Learner A apparently had realized that he did not know the words that matched what the print said. This realization requires an awareness of the alphabetic principle and some knowledge of the relations between sounds and symbols”. During participant observation in this study, Learner A wrote the word “hw” as the word he read at home to indicate his knowledge of the relations between sounds and symbols. The word Learner A wrote was an unfamiliar printed word for him which required him to identify the letters and produce sounds the letters made, also must blend those phoneme sounds together to produce a likely pronunciation for the word (Vadasy & O’Connor 2011:12) “how” instead of “hw”. Table 4.6 illustrates Learner A’s work he copied from the chalkboard.

The researcher's observations revealed that Learner A experienced problems such as incorrect spelling, omission of letters, and inconsistent writing of one word "map" in three different ways (map, mop, and mep) when copying words from the chalkboard. Similarly in table 4.8, the educator in grade two observed and indicated the following: "Learner A could not copy words from the chalkboard, he omitted some letters of the words he copied".

This study confirms the findings of Torgesen (in Berg & Stegeman 2003:49) that "most learners who experience a reading failure demonstrate early and persistent problems in learning how to accurately identify printed words. In turn, this results in difficulties in understanding and applying the alphabetic principle in decoding unfamiliar words".

Shore and Sabatini (2009:4) compare a fluent reader to a dysfluent reader as "the former being skilled at recognizing words and the latter slow, hesitant, makes errors in word identification and pause frequently to sound out words". The findings in participant observations in this study confirmed Shore and Sabatini's (2009:4) findings that Learner A is a dysfluent reader. He read the Setswana paragraph slowly, hesitantly and pausing frequently to sound out words.

Learner A's omission of the word "rounding" in "rounding off" and only reading the second word "off" indicated problems perceiving words accurately (Richards 2001:24). It is clear that he was unable to identify or sound out the word "rounding". Grossen (1997) gives the Intermediate Phase educator the importance of assessing learners' inability to decode single words as the "most reliable indicator of a reading disability".

Biemiller (in Stahl & Mckenna 2000:5) observed that "learners learning to read in first grade are not focusing on print in order to read, but instead are focusing on the meaning of the text by substituting any word that made sense when reading a text". Similarly, Learner A was not focusing on printed text and used the word "ub" for "number sentence" to make sense when he read aloud. Vadasy and O'Connor (2011:64) found that "over 90% of struggling readers identified in the primary grades,



and over 60% of those identified after grade 3, had problems that included accuracy and speed of word recognition”.

#### **4.8 SUMMARY**

Learner A managed to write in the correct sequence the first eight letters out of at least the first thirteen letters of the alphabet. The above finding revealed that Learner A's inability to write and sound out the letters of the alphabet indicated a reading problem from the learner. He had a didactic deficit which is evidenced in his writing upper and lower case letters in one list that is mixing the upper case and lower case, omission and repeating some letters, also incorrectly sequencing letters.

There is no existing theory on assessing the writing of the letters of the alphabet. As mentioned before this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge, learners who experience difficulty in writing the letters of the alphabet in the correct order experience difficulty in segmenting words, spelling words, and recognising words which negatively affect their reading ability.

Learner A was not efficiently taught the sound system of the language of instruction, (LOLT) English to help him to associate the written form with oral form. Therefore, he was not able to attend to the individual sounds in English to help him to learn the alphabetic principle. He did not know how to map letters onto phonemes so that he could be able to segment words correctly. The main finding in this study was that Learner A used trial and error in segmenting the concepts; as a result he managed to segment correctly only one sound in the concept “whole number” out of the five mathematical concepts he is required to read in class.

The following theoretical finding: in early studies of the relationship between phonological awareness and reading it was found that “good readers performed consistently better on measures of phonological awareness than do poor readers”, confirms that Learner A can be identified by the Intermediate Phase educator as a poor reader because of poor teaching in this study.

Learner A's lack of phonological awareness skills affected his ability to spell correctly and confirmed the finding that Learner A did not use the knowledge of segmenting and letter sounds to spell the interior of words correctly, which suggests a lack of understanding of the alphabetic principle and therefore was unable to recognize printed words accurately. Learner A was able to recognize only the first concept out of five concepts.

In Chapter Five conclusions and recommendations will be discussed, as well as a summary of the investigation, the negative experiences and limitations in the current study that could have impacted the findings.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this Chapter there will be a focus on the answering of the research questions. Conclusions will be drawn from the qualitative study. This will be followed by discussion of some limitations experienced while conducting this study, and a few recommendations

#### **5.2 THE ANSWER TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

##### **5.2.1 What is the role of an Intermediate Phase educator when assessing a learner's ability to write in the correct order at least thirteen letters of the alphabet?**

The role of the Intermediate Phase educator in assessing a learner's ability to write in the correct order at least thirteen letters of the alphabet is to use the following three activities: firstly, a learner has to identify either orally or in written form the letters of the alphabet in his or her name; secondly, to recite the letters of the alphabet; thirdly, to write in the correct sequence all the letters of the alphabet.

During the above three activities the educator observe learner's responses and body language to be able to use a journal and to record the reflection notes. A learner who cannot write the letters of the alphabet in the correct order can encounter problems in segmenting words as the letters of the alphabet consists of sounds (phonemes) in them.

##### **5.2.2 What is the role of the Intermediate Phase educator when assessing a learner who is phonologically aware of the language of instruction, which in this study is English?**

The Intermediate Phase educator can assess a learner's phonological awareness by giving the learner a chance to segment any concepts that the learner experiences

problems in reading or writing in any subject offered by the educator. For example, the following mathematical concepts: whole numbers, fractions, perimeter, rounding off, and number sentence, the participant was instructed to generate the initial, medial, and final phoneme within them, but could not segment correctly almost all the above mathematical concepts. The results indicated that the participant is not phonologically aware of English. The results that the Intermediate Phase educator will receive will serve as a baseline assessment to indicate that the learner was successfully taught to segment in the Foundation Phase. If the results indicate that a learner was not successfully taught to segment the educator can then offer supportive instruction on phoneme segmentation and then give a written activity based on phoneme segmentation. The educator should use a journal to record the results of the baseline assessment and those of the activities after the instruction. A learner who is not phonologically aware of English might experience spelling problems.

### **5.2.3 Which assessment method can the Intermediate Phase educator use to assess a learner's spelling ability?**

There are two methods the Intermediate Phase educator can use to assess a learner's spelling ability. The first method is to use a dictation test based on the very same concepts that were used in phoneme segmentation activity. It is highly possible that the learner remembers the sounds and sequence of the letters of the alphabet of these same concepts used in phoneme segmentation activities. The Intermediate Phase educator can dictate the above concepts he or she used in the phoneme segmentation activity. There should be at least five concepts in a spelling activity.

During the second method, the Intermediate Phase educator makes a follow up on the first activity, the dictation test, by assessing the way a learner copies notes, class-work, corrections or tests from the chalkboard. The educator assesses whether a learner omits, adds or sequences incorrectly letters within words. If a learner does omit, add or sequence incorrectly letters within words, it indicates that a learner encounter problems in spelling words. The educator can use a journal to record the results of a spelling activity and to describe the specific mistakes. A

learner who cannot spell words correctly might experience problems in recognising words.

#### **5.2.4 How can the Intermediate Phase educator assess a learner's ability to recognise mathematical high frequency words?**

The Intermediate Phase educator can use the very same concepts as were used in the phonemic awareness activity and spelling activity to assess a learner's ability to recognise mathematical or any subject high frequency words. The educator can write each of those concepts in a separate flash card. The educator will inform a learner that he or she will reveal one flash card at a time for a learner to read aloud. The card that has been read correctly will be placed in the shoe box indicating *correctly read*. The card that has been read incorrectly will be placed in the shoe box marked *incorrectly read*. The card that a learner did not respond to will be placed in the shoe box marked *did not respond*. The card which a learner only read either the first or the last letter will be placed in a relevant shoe box each marked *first letter read* or *last letter read*. The card that a learner moved lips without uttering any sound will be placed in a shoe box marked *moving lips*. The educator can use any method and material to sort out the cards but it is important that all the responses will be correctly recorded in a journal.

### **5.3 SUMMARY OF THE INVESTIGATIONS**

The researcher as an educator conducted a case study assessing one learner; Learner A to identify him as a learner with reading problems in the context of his school. She used the following methods to gather data: interview, participant observation, document study and multi-method strategies.

The preceding methods revealed that Learner A experienced difficulty in writing the letters of the alphabet, segmenting, spelling, and recognizing mathematical concepts which consisted of the reading process in this study. Mathematical concepts were used in this study because reading is the major central route to content, and without accurate and fluent reading skills, access to mathematics is diminished (Berg and Stegeman 2003:47). Experiencing difficulties in all the four components of the

reading process enabled the Intermediate Phase educator to make an informed decision of identifying Learner A as a learner with reading problems.

Learner A could not write in the correct sequence at least thirteen letters of the alphabet; was not phonologically aware of the language of instruction, English; he could not spell correctly mathematical concepts used in class; and had difficulty in recognizing the very same mathematical concepts he was spelling.

The findings of this study were related to the literature in order to confirm, disconfirm and contribute to the body of knowledge. Berg and Stegelman's (2003:51) theoretical finding: "In early studies of the relationship between phonological awareness and reading it was found that "good readers performed consistently better on measures of phonological awareness than do poor readers", confirmed that Learner A could be identified by the Intermediate Phase educator as a poor reader in this study because he performed poorly on the measures of phonological awareness.

This study contributed to the existing body of knowledge, by finding that a learner(s) who experience difficulty in writing the letters of the alphabet in the correct order as a result of learner's reading problems experienced difficulty in segmenting words, spelling words, and recognising words which negatively affect his or her reading ability.

#### **5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The areas that the results of this study would be useful for future research by other researchers are:

- training of the parents in teaching letters of the alphabet to two year olds at home is the firm foundation of reading,
- assessing the written knowledge of the letters of the alphabet in pre-school to prevent future reading problems,
- Teaching English letter-sound correspondence in pre-school in order to decode words accurately,

- using the second language in grade R to teach phonemic awareness skills to prevent reading problems,
- using phonemic awareness skills to spell correctly English words in the first grade, and
- teaching second grade learners word recognition skills to read fluently.

## **5.5 CONCLUSIONS**

Learner A experienced decoding problems. He had trouble recognising words, understanding how the arrangement of letters in a word relates to its pronunciation, writing the letters of the alphabet, segmenting and blending words. When a learner has trouble in decoding single words, he or she experiences reading problems.

Learner A needs Corrective Reading Intervention Program offered by Florida Center for Reading Research. The Corrective Reading Program targets learners who are reading one or more years below grade level. One of the essential goals of the program is to increase reading accuracy (decoding). Word - attack skills is one of the lessons in the decoding strand.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman, (2000); Rossman and Rallis, (2003); in Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:79) say “limitations of the study expose the conditions that may weaken the study”. Limitations arise from, amongst other things, “sample selection, reliance on certain techniques for gathering data, and issues of researcher bias” (Bloomberg & Volpe 2008:79). For example, the sample of this study was limited to one grade four - learner referred as Learner A. An in-depth case study on the reading problems was conducted with this learner. Therefore, results of this study “could not be generalised” (Glanz 2006:283) to all grade four learners, and certainly not to all learners in the Intermediate Phase.

## 5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of the Intermediate Phase educator is to develop and administer the reading activities, observe a learner when who recites; writes and identifies the letters of the alphabet; segment words to show phonological awareness skill; spell words in the dictation test including any written activity; and reads aloud the single written words to determine word recognition ability. The themes that emerged from the empirical study are as follows: difficulty in sequencing written letters of the alphabet, inability to segment words, spelling problems and word recognition problems. The study indicated that the participant's reading problems were based on an inability to decode single words.

Learners should be taught to decode single words. Programmes of training educators to teach learners to decode single words should be developed by the education leaders. When the results of the baseline assessment reveal that a learner has a decoding problem in the Intermediate Phase, the educator should provide the necessary intervention. Therefore, it is recommended that the education leaders use the Corrective Reading Intervention Program for example to train both the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase educators to teach learners to decode single words and provide intervention where it is needed. Teacher materials include a Series Guide which contains:

- reproducible placement tests and sample lessons;
- Teacher Decoding Presentation Book that provides explicit step-by-step script, chalkboard activities, and point system chart;
- Teacher Guide contains tips and techniques for correcting mistakes, summarizes strategies, and additional ideas for teaching specific skills and motivating learners;
- Learner materials consist of Hard-cover learner Decoding Textbooks, and Learners' Decoding Workbooks. (Florida Center for Reading Research)



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## ANNEXURES

### Annexure A

#### Letter of request to do research to the Executive District Manager

Boitirelo Public Primary School

P.O Box 40035

Ikageng

2525

15 December 2009

Dr Kenneth Kaunda District

Office of the Executive Manager

Private Bag X1256

Potchefstroom

2520

Dear District Manager

I am an educator at the above mentioned school and a UNISA master's student. I hereby request to conduct a research at Boitirelo Public Primary school.

The aim of the research is to determine the role of the Intermediate Phase educator in the identification of learners with reading problems in the Intermediate Phase.

The mathematics concepts will be used to test the learners' phonemic awareness skills, knowledge of the letters of the alphabet, spelling skills and the ability to recognize isolated single words.

Learners who experience problems in all of the above skills will form the sample of the study. The parents of the learners will be formally requested to give permission for their children to

participate in this study as the learners are minors. The learners' names will be protected by using alphabets, for example, Learner A. The confidentiality of the data is assured.

The researcher, the author of this letter, will administer all the reading activities in the identified classes (grades 4, 5 and 6). The research process will not interfere with the researcher's daily work and the functioning of the school. The time frame of this study will be at least two terms.

This research will be of great benefit for the school as it will improve the reading level of the learners which in turn improve the results of the school. Most importantly, the learners who will be identified will receive the necessary help to be placed in a special school by the Department of Education.

The findings of this study will be communicated to you.

Yours faithfully

D.P. Mkwakwe (Mrs).



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**DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE MANAGER**

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To : Mrs D.P Mkwakwe

From : Dr S.H Mvula  
Executive District Manager

Date : 08 January 2010

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

We hereby acknowledge receipt of your letter. Please note that your request to the above subject has been granted under the following provisions:

1. The activities you undertake at schools should not tamper with the normal process of learning and teaching;
2. You inform the principals of your identified schools of your impending visit and activity;
3. You obtain prior permission from this office before availing your findings for public or media consumption.

Wishing you well in your endeavour.

Thanking you

**DR S.H MVULA**  
**EXECUTIVE DISTRICT MANAGER**

## Annexure C

### Letter of request to do research to the Principal

6194 Muwe Street

Ikageng

2539

10 January 2010

Boitirelo Public Primary School

PO BOX 40035

Ikageng

2525

Dear Principal

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

The aim of the research is to determine the role of the educators to identify learners with reading problems in the Intermediate Phase. The Mathematics concepts will be used: learners will be dictated at least five concepts to find out whether they are able to spell them correctly. It has been found out learners who are able to spell the concepts are able to read them in any context.

The Mathematics educators are requested to administer the above dictation test. It will not interfere with their daily work as it will take only a minute or two to complete. One class in the following grades: 4, 5 and 6 will take the test. Marking will be done by the researcher.

The learners who did not perform well will receive phonetic, alphabetic letter, and word knowledge intervention. Mathematics educators if they are willing, will be trained on how to administer the intervention. The concepts will be taught with an understanding in the context of the instruction and questions. For example, learners will be taught to identify the most important words in the instruction

and in the question, that is, action verbs. Learners who will not respond to the intervention will be identified as learners with reading problems.

The above research will be of great benefit for the school as it will improve the level of the learners' reading which in turn improves the results of the school. Most importantly, the learners who will be identified will receive the necessary help to be placed in the special school by the Department of Education.

Yours faithfully

DP Mkwakwe



# BOITIRELO PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

P.O. Box 40035  
IKAGENG 2525  
Tel: 018 295 0227  
Fax: 018 295 0372

E-mail: boitirelo@screamer.co.za

Inquiries: SA Sebetlele

Date: 2010.01.20

## SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR A RESEARCH

Dear Mrs. DP Mkwakwe

I have received your request to conduct a research at our school, and have the pleasure of informing you that permission to conduct such a research at our school is hereby granted.

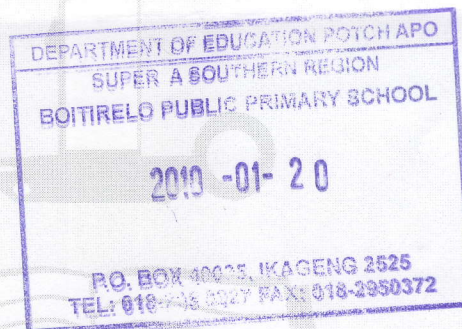
You are however reminded that your research is voluntary on both the learners and educators, and that learning and teaching time must be adhered to and not be compromised. I hope that at the end of your research, you will send me the results as they will assist us to identify learners with barriers to learning.

I wish you all the best with your studies.

Yours faithfully

SEWAGODIMO AMOS SEBETLELE

Principal





## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Parents

I am a master's student from the University of South Africa, my supervisor is Dr Vogel. I am an educator at your child's school. The aim of my research is to use different ways of identifying learners with reading problems in grades four, five and six.

The ways that I will use are to interview learners to find out about the ways they were taught the sounds of the letters of the alphabet, how does learners combine the letters of the alphabet to form words, and whether a learner is able to recognize most of the words that are used in mathematics. The interview will be conducted at school after lessons in a private room. The tape recorder will be used to record the interview. No one will have an access to the taped interview except the researcher or the parents.

The second way is to use your child's previous report cards to check how he or she was progressing at school. The third way is to observe the way your child behaves during reading sessions in class.

One of the benefits of this research is that the researcher will be able to identify your child's problems and seek ways of helping to solve the reading problem and be able to read with an understanding. When a child understands what he or she reads is able to progress well at school. But when the researcher after helping your child and still shows no progress, the researcher can advise the parent to let his or her child to be assessed by other professionals before referring your child to a special school.

However, the disadvantage is that if both the learner and the parents do not cooperate to help a child at home when given homework to do, it is impossible to get the real source that cause a reading problem.

There are no risks involved in this research. Both the child's and parents' identity will not be revealed. False names will be used in the research. You are free to let your child opt out of the research at any stage in the research.

Thank you for your participation

Learner's Name: *Edward Zimankulu*

Grade: *5<sup>A</sup>*

Parent's Name: *Evelyn Zimankulu*

Parent's signature: *E. Zimankulu*

Date: *2010/01/24*

Witness: *Suzanne Phillips*

Witness's signature: *S. Phillips*

Date: *2010/01/24*

Edward  
Grade 4c

Dictation

04 August 2018

- ~~hnn nadas~~ hnnl namadas
- fakases
- kadifo
- folabeka
- nadaseteses
- redethl
- mas
- terimita
- kat
- talis

0/10  
not recognisable  
copy 10/8

Grade 4C

Edward

05 August 2010

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

f)

g) ?

h)

i)

j)

k)

l)

m)

n)

o)

p)

q)

r)

s)

t)

problems

Sample D: Spelling After Phoneme Segmentation (06 August 2010)

6 August 201

1 Wolnuaba S ✓

2 wonehe ✓

3 Radi off ✓

4 folk bara ✓

5 Nuabansences ✓

Sample C: Phoneme Segmentation (06 August 2010)

Edward

6 August 2010

1 Whole ~~am~~ naba / s

2 fa / cene / s

3 Rou / ndi o / ff

4 fl / or / ns Do / ori

5 Nua / bana sen / tencens

Appendix 3

SAMPLES OF LEARNER A'S PERFORMANCE DURING DATA COLLECTION

Sample A: Alphabet Writing (23 May 2011)

23 / May / 2011  
AbcdEfgHf vws ~~vw~~  
AbcdEfgHpyvwxuzmnORl

1

wh-oo-le

Whole

sovae  
numbers

~~Fraction's~~

~~Rounding off ✓~~

~~Perimeter~~

~~Number Sentences~~

Spelling during after school

Sample C: Spelling After Reading Aloud Five Mathematical Concepts (23 May 2011)

whoe

fortiont

Runata

Perimter

Numewr



Sample D: Homework Response Based On Single Word Reading (24 May 2011)

24/05/11 h.w read any word  
H1m → participant's verbal response.

24/05/11  
hw → participant's written  
response

## SAMPLE OF HOW LEARNER A COPIED WORDS FROM THE CHALKBOARD

Remedial -

Sample A: Social Science Remedial Work (24 February 2010)

12 february 2010

1/6 The book that show maps is called

1/2 for ~~Mass~~ Atlas

kinds of maps are Physical map

map is a political map that show the shape of a big land mass

A plan view is a map

~~P O N E~~

Re-Data Handling

24 february 2010

1 What is a plan view? a very simple kind of

2 map

3 How many kinds of maps do we have? 2

Political map

4 Name them Political physical map

5 What does the Atlas show?

6 What does the Atlas show? called

7 Name few features found in a map?

8 A drawing that shows the shape of big land mass  
countries

9 usually marks on maps to show roads,

places, rivers, mountains,

10 find our way to my aunt's house

11 what the symbols mean

Appendix 5

PARENT/GUARDIAN INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

PARENT/ GUARDIAN INTERVIEW

Dear parent/ guardian

As an educator and a researcher at Boitirelo Primary School, I ask for your permission to include your child in the research on reading. Please circle one of the following: Agree/Do not agree. If you circled agree, may you please answer the following questions:

PARENT'S NAME: Evelyn

LEARNER'S NAME: Edward

GRADE:

DATE: 17 August 2010

1. Have you ever read a book to your child? Yes.....if yes,  
When Every Wednesday  
What Different books like The visit, The toilet etc.
2. Do you have time to check your child's school work? Yes.....if yes, what have you noticed about his/her performance?  
his performance is very poor it need some attention so I'm willing to do so because I want him to be more inspired to his work and be like other learners.
3. What would you say is the major reason for your child's school performance?  
.....  
.....  
.....
4. What are you currently doing at home to help? I try helping him to read doing all my best to make him understand his work.
5. What is the school or the teacher doing to help?  
.....  
.....  
.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

## Interview schedule

Questions on the letters of alphabet

Researcher: Recite the letters of the alphabet

1 Participant: A, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m,  
n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y,  
z.

Reflection notes : Showed confidence and was  
and observations very fast

2 Researcher: Give all the letters that are in your  
name

Participant: E, d, w, a, r, d

Observations: showed confidence

3 Researcher: Write the letters of the alphabet

Participant: First attempt: A, b, c, d, E, f, G, h, p,  
v, w, s, w,  
Second attempt: A, b, c, d, E, f, G,  
h, p, v, w, x, u, z, M, M, o, R, I

Observations: Showed reluctance and sadness;  
the researcher and the participant  
went outside to create a  
conducive environment.  
It took him five minutes to  
write the letters.