

**TITLE: EXPERIENCE OF GRADE FOUR TEACHERS WITH REGARD TO
READING COMPETENCE IN TWO SCHOOLS AT
HLANGANANISOUTH CIRCUIT IN
VHEMBE DISTRICT**

By

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Education with specialisation in
Educational Management**

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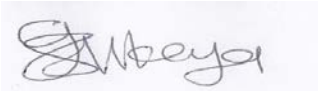
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DATE OF SUBMISSION: 15 NOVEMBER 2014

DECLARATION

I Ivy Vukeya declare that **‘EXPERIENCE OF GRADE FOUR TEACHERS WITH REGARD TO READING COMPETENCE IN TWO SCHOOLS AT HLANGANANI SOUTH CIRCUIT, VHEMBE DISTRICT’** is my own work and all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ivy Vukeya', is written on a light blue rectangular background.

DATE 2014/11.12

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late father **Wilson Makhubele** and my mom **N`wamakhensarixile Florah Makhubele**, my beloved husband **Mhlava Reckson Vukeya** and my children **Nhlamulo, Basambilu, Marvellous, Danisa and Lughile**. You tolerated and patiently endured my absence and stresses for the sake of this study. I also dedicated to my sisters and my brothers who show support.

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Thanks to God for the wisdom.

Declaration by the editor

I, Leanne Brown, declare that I have scrutinised the dissertation and effected the necessary corrections, and also made essential suggestions. However, the final decision and responsibility remain that of the author.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to find out about the perception of grade four teachers with regard to reading competence of the learners. The ability to read is an important skill in today's modern world where so much information is transmitted in written form. It is also important that people have reading skills whether they are in school or not. The choice of this research topic emanated from an observation from past research that, levels of reading difficulties among primary school pupils are very high and Hlanganani south circuit is not an exception.

This research is relevant as most learners in grade four are not able to read especially in English. These are some of the main problem that makes high failure rate of grade four learners in ANA results, because most learners do not know how to read and it also affect all subjects that they learn in English.

The problem of the study pivots around the experiences of grade four teachers with regard to reading competency skills of the learners. Results from most studies carried out on reading indicate that most pupils are not able to read according to what is expected of their grade level. It is against this background that this study sought to establish the factors that lead to reading difficulties.

The research methods used are interviews and classroom observation with the focus on a sample of teachers from grade four in two schools at Hlanganani south circuit. The researcher selected these tools because they are directed by research questions. The researcher wanted to find out from the research participants how they taught, their beliefs and perceptions about teaching reading. Qualitative methods are used to generate data.

Findings of the study indicate that grade four learners have reading difficulties. These include omitting, substituting and adding words as well as mispronouncing words. This is a big challenge for the teachers who teach these learners. This can be frustrating for both the learners and teachers especially where the teacher does not understand the causes of reading difficulties, how to assess those learners with reading without competence as well as how to help out. According to the findings of this study, teachers have their own perceptions about the causes of reading with competence and their own way of assessing learners with reading difficulties.

Government as the state, and local levels should provide appropriate materials for teaching reading skills. Libraries should be provided for our primary schools, since the absence of libraries is a factor in the deficiency in reading skills.

Key concepts: Grade four learners, Reading, Teachers

Abbreviations:

ANA- Annual National Assessment

FFC- Foundation For Learning campaign

MEC- Member of the Executive Council

NCS- National Curriculum Statement (Grade R-9)

SASA- South African School Act

QUIDS-UP- Quality Improvement Development Support and Upliftment Programme

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANA- Annual National Assessment

MEC- Member of the Executive Council

FFL- Foundation for learning campaign

QUIDS-UP- Quality Improvement Development Support and Upliftment Programme

NQF- National Qualifications Framework

NCS- National Curriculum Statement (Grade R-9)

QAA-Quarterly Assessment Activities

SASA- South African School Act

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Hlanganani South Circuit is situated in the Vhembe district of the Limpopo province of South Africa. Hlanganani South Circuit consists of eleven primary schools. In this circuit, most of the teachers in primary schools, especially grade four teachers, are facing the challenge of learners not coping when it comes to reading. It seems that learners do not understand the language of teaching, which is English, because in the foundation phase they were taught in their mother tongue.

In grade four, learners are taught five learning areas in English and the only learning area which is not done in English is their mother tongue (home language). It is difficult for them to teach these learners, especially as it is their first time to be taught in English. It is important for learners to master both the home language and English in the foundation phase, since this will help them to perform well in the intermediate phase.

1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

From the Annual National Assessment (ANA) results, it is clear that the progress of learners is very poor because learners do not know how to read question papers. It is a sign that not everything is in order when learners do not know how to read and write. The implication is that even the grade 12 results are bound to suffer, as learners go to secondary school without knowing how to read and write. For instance, if they cannot read, how will be able to read the questions in the examinations?

According to Motshega, the Minister of Education, it is necessary for learners in the early grades to obtain proper reading skills in order to achieve success during the rest of their school careers, as well as in their later economically active years (*Beeld*, Wednesday 6 March, 2010:2). The problem of learners being unable to read has played an important role in motivating the researcher to undertake this study. We need to find appropriate answers to this ongoing problem, as without a proper foundation, no learner will be able to achieve to the best of his or her abilities.

Nowadays, it is important that a person must be able to read, write and count, in order to be independent and aware of what is happening around him or her. We live in a technology-driven world, in which everything moves at a fast pace.

1.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS / CONCEPTS

1.3.1 Grade: Means that part of an educational programme which a learner may complete in one school year, or any other educational programme which the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) may deem to be equivalent (DoE Act No.84 of 1996: 4). In this study, the focus is on Grade four teachers' experiences regarding learners who cannot read.

1.3.2 Learner: Refers to any person, including part-time learner, receiving education at a public or independent school or learning institution linked to an accredited assessment body. In this study, the learner or child is in formal education in a Grade four class (NCS Orientation Guide, 2006:13). A 'learner' is defined by the South African School Act (SASA) as any person, whether a child or adult, who receives education (DoE Act No.84 of 1996:7).

1.3.3 School: Refers to any public or private institution registered with the Department of Education to deliver a programme of learning registered on the NQF (NCS, National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for schools 2001: 4). In this study, a 'School' is a public school or an independent school which enrolls learners in Grades R-12 (DoE Act No.84 of 1996: 4).

1.3.4 Teacher: Refers to any person, excluding a person who is appointed to exclusively perform extracurricular duties, who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and education psychological services at a school (South African School Act 84 of 1996: 4). This study focuses on teachers who teach Grade four learners.

A **teacher** (also called a **schoolteacher**) is a person who provides [education](#) to pupils (children) and students (adults).

A teacher is not just someone who stands in front of a classroom in a school. A teacher can be anyone who takes the time to share secular knowledge, so that the learner can grow and be prepared for what lies ahead.

1.3.5 Experience: Refers to the accumulation of knowledge or skills that result from direct participation in events or activities; "a man of experience"; "experience is the best teacher." This study pays particular attention to the experiences of those teachers who teach Grade four learners, in order to find out why the majority of these learners cannot read.

1.3.6 Reading: This is a single aspect or learning outcome in literacy competence, which can be described as the construction of meaning for which the learner must attain a necessary level of decoding proficiency (Pressley, 2006:11-27). Reading is an act of communication in which information is transferred from a transmitter to a receiver. Reading, in its broad sense, is defined as "a combination of text input, appropriate cognitive processes, and the information that we already know" (Grabe, 2009:74). Reading involves the integration of a set of common underlying processes and knowledge that is used to gain understanding.

1.4 FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The ability to read is very important if one wishes to succeed in life, since one cannot get a good job if one is unable to read. Therefore, reading is the best key to success. "Reading and writing are basic skills that a child should master during their first school years to be able to assimilate new knowledge and skills in future" (Paananen et al.: 25). Ideally, pupils are expected to be fluent in reading by the time they reach grade six because reading skills are taught during the first six years of primary education, as mentioned earlier. It is also argued that without the ability to read, one's performance in other school subjects might be affected (OECD/UNESCO, 2000).

However, there are many children who encounter reading problems in Hlanganani South Circuit, to such an extent that some of them might complete 7 years of primary education without having the ability to read even a three-letter word.

This condition may sometimes cause them to repeat an academic year or drop out from school (MoE, 1992). Results from most studies carried out on reading indicate that most pupils are not able to read according to what is expected of their grade level. Educational Quality (SACMEQ), in 1995, found that 97.6% of the grade four learners were unable to read (Kelly, 1999). It is against this background that this study sought to determine the factors that lead to reading difficulties. The study will further identify challenges that teachers experience in teaching reading.

1.4.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To find out through the research questions from the experienced teachers of grade four learners why the majority of these learners appear to lack the requisite reading competency skills.

1.4.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

1.4.2.1 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the experiences of grade four teachers with regard to reading competence?

1.4.2.2 SUB-QUESTIONS

- What are teachers' perceptions regarding the causes of reading difficulties?
- Does the physical school environment have a negative effect on one's reading ability?
- What are the methods used by teachers in teaching reading to learners?
- What measures do teachers adopt in order to minimise reading difficulties?

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 AIM OF THE STUDY

- To investigate the experiences of grade four teachers with regard to reading competence among grade four learners.

1.5.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify factors contributing to reading difficulties among grade four learners.
- To determine the effect of the physical school environment on learners' reading ability.
- To identify the methods used by teachers in teaching reading to learners.
- To investigate measures adopted by teachers to minimise reading difficulties.
- To determine teachers' perceptions of the causes of reading difficulties.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher is going to investigate the experiences of grade four teachers at two schools out of the eleven schools in Hlanganani South circuit. These two schools have been chosen because the researcher wanted to identify the problems related to the inability to read among grade four learners and what needs to be done to improve the situation of poor reading in grade four. The researcher is going to interview grade four teachers of the two schools and will use interviews to obtain relevant information. The interviews will focus on the teachers.

1.7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The ability to read is an important skill in today's modern world, where so much information is transmitted in written form. It is important that people have reading skills, whether they are in school or not. The choice of this research topic emanated from an observation from past research that levels of reading difficulties among primary school pupils are very high, and Hlanganani South circuit is not an exception in this regard (Kelly, 1999). Hlanganani South circuit could possibly have many children who have severe reading problems, which have not yet been identified. Therefore, there is a need to identify and understand these reading difficulties early in life, as well as the challenges that they create, so that the situation can hopefully be changed for the better.

This study will involve grade four learners from the Hlanganani South circuit of Vhembe District. This group has been chosen because in the following year, they are supposed to be in grade five, where they are expected to write examinations, which have to be read and answered in English, without any assistance. These examinations are very important, as they determine whether or not the pupil will proceed. Therefore, it is expected that by the time a pupil reaches grade four, s/he must be competent in reading. The other reason for choosing learners in grade four is that reading skills are usually taught during the initial years of primary education (Paananen et al., 2009).

The assumption is therefore that by grade four, pupils should be competent readers. It is hoped that this study will, to a reasonable extent, help teachers in general, special education teachers, therapists in various fields and other relevant stakeholders to be able to handle children with reading difficulties. It is often said that 'children are the future leaders'. What kind of future can it be if the leaders are not able to read? Children are a major component of any given society and their competence in all aspects of life is critical for the functioning of society at large.

It is hoped that this study will therefore contribute to information generation in this domain. It is one way of building up a far greater knowledge and evidence base of problems, interventions and what works with this group of young people.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

Grade four learners often experience difficulties in reading because grade four is a transitional grade from mother tongue to English as the medium of instruction in Hlanganani South circuit schools. Reading problems are endemic in South Africa, with recent media reports on the high matriculation (matric) failure rate indicating that most learners still cannot read or write, and thus bring down the overall matric performance (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2010:30). What research is available (McDonald, 2002:47) indicates that in general, South African learners' reading skills are poorly developed from primary school through to tertiary level.

Assessments reveal a high number of learners who cannot read at the appropriate grade or age level, and many are unable to read at all (National Panel, 2004:80).

There has also been a report of cases in which learners in higher grades continue to battle to read and write, even to write their own names (Barone, 2005:47). The frustration shared by many Senior Phase teachers suggests problems in the foundation phase, with the inability to read and write identified as one of the major causes of poor academic performance of learners across the country (Johnson, 2006:25). Research has shown that children's success in reading depends more on teachers' commitment to the curriculum than on the type of programme used (Phajane, 2012:22).

1.9 METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

1.9.1 METHODOLOGY

According to Braynard and Hanekom (1997:27), research methodology is the way in which data is collected within the framework of the research process. In this study, the researcher chose qualitative methodologies for collecting data. These methods make use of specific techniques to collect data, such as literature reviews, interviews, questionnaires and direct observation.

According to de Vos et al. (2005: 71), science is an enterprise dedicated to finding out or advancing knowledge, making discoveries, and acquiring facts. Irrespective of what one wants to acquire, there is a process involved. This is a process of scientific enquiry, a way of learning and knowing things about the world around us.

According to Mouton (2004:56), research methodology focuses on the research process and the kinds of tools and procedures to be used. It further focuses on the individual (not linear) steps in the research process and the most objective (unbiased) procedures to be employed.

With regard to this study, it becomes imperative to indicate the main tools that have been chosen and employed, namely qualitative methodologies.

1.9.2 DESIGN

Qualitative research methodology rests on the assumption that a valid understanding of the research problem can be gained through accumulated knowledge acquired first-hand by a single researcher (de Vos et al., 2005: 74). Qualitative research is suitable for a study of a relatively unknown terrain and seeks to understand phenomena. In this study, unstructured interviews were selected as the best instrument for achieving the study objective.

Welman and Kruger (1999: 196) state that unstructured interviews are usually employed in explorative research to identify important variables in a particular area; to formulate penetrating questions on them; and to generate hypotheses for further investigation.

Through these unstructured interviews, an attempt was made to understand how teachers experience the reading of grade four learners, that is, what the problem is and what can be done to solve it, if anything. These questions will be answered by the participants' experiences, feelings, beliefs and convictions.

1.10 CHAPTER DIVISION

This study consists of five chapters, each of which focuses on a specific aspect of the research project.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides a background to the investigation, and includes the formulation of the research questions, aim and objectives of the study, limitations and significance of the study, literature review, description of the methodology used, the value of the study, and an explanation of key concepts.

Chapter: 2 Literature review

The first step in the research process is to respond to the questions addressed by the study, which involved a review of related literature. The first part of the literature review relates to grade four teachers. National and international sources on this topic were

studied and reviewed in this chapter. Another purpose of the literature review was to develop operational contracts, which will enable the research to access relevant data. The choice of data informs the appropriate approach and method for data collection. Finally, related research was studied with the aim of establishing similarities and differences, and in order to draw inferences.

Chapter 3: Research methodology and design

This study made use of two theories, namely systems theory and phenomenology. Systems theory is the theory that refers to “truth as a whole”. In this regard, the challenges that Grade four teachers have must be looked at as a whole. The other theory is phenomenology, in which the main emphasis is on the discovery of the real world and human beings.

This chapter will also discuss the research design used in the study. A research design is the overall plan for collecting data in order to answer the research questions, and the specific data analysis techniques that the researcher intends to use (Fraenkel et al., 1993: 556). This study will use the qualitative approach. The interviews will be unstructured, since this type of interview is more in-depth than other interviews, and the other kind of interviews that will be used in this study are semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 4: Results and analysis

In this chapter, the data analysis techniques will be discussed. The relationship amongst variables will be analysed, and some categories and appendices will be used for the results, while tables will be used for data analysis.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

The researcher will summarise the main findings of the study in this chapter, and will also draw conclusions and make suggestions and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Leedy and Ormord (2005:64) maintain that the term 'literature review' describes the theoretical perspective regarding the research problem. The main aim of the literature review is to determine what other authors have found in relation to the topic chosen for the study. Neuman (2006: 34) regards the review of existing knowledge about a subject as an essential step in the research process. He bases this on the assumption that knowledge accumulates and that we learn from and build on what others have done before us (Neuman, 2006: 30). As researchers, we are therefore obliged to familiarise ourselves with any publications on research completed in the field of study before conducting a specific research. For these reasons, recent South African and international publications on poor reading were reviewed. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of grade four teachers with regard to poor reading within selected schools in the Hlanganani South circuit.

In light of the above, the aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the concepts, contexts, theories, implications and previous literature relevant to this study. Due to the fact that this study focuses on grade four learners, and that reading has been associated with individual characteristics, such as self-concept, it was deemed necessary to acquire an understanding of adolescent development and its relationship to reading.

This provides a challenge for teachers and the parents to work together, in order to improve the education of learners. The Department of Education (DoE) has launched a number of campaigns in order to remedy the situation:

- Quality Improvement Development Support and Upliftment Programme-for Public Schools (QUIDS-UP), launched in 2007 as an affirmative action programme targeting schools serving high poverty school communities, where the quality of education is seriously compromised due to the lack of resources.

- Foundation for Learning Campaign (FFL) launched in 2008 as a four year campaign to improve the reading, writing and numeracy of all learners. It was intended to provide clearer, more specific guidelines for teachers as directives to support schools and education officials across the system. Teachers were supplied with the following documents in order to implement the campaign:
 - Handbook in teaching reading in the early grades, which explained the core methodologies advocated by the campaign.
 - Assessment framework books (for foundation and intermediate phase), which set the milestones or knowledge and skills to be taught for each grade in each term.
 - Quarterly Assessment Activities (QAA) for Literacy and Numeracy-Grade 1-3, providing further assistance to teachers in developing assessment tasks.
 - Lesson plans for Grade 1-6 based on the assessment framework milestone.
 - Workbook, which aimed to expand on the lesson.

2.2 Meaning of reading

The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (Reber, 1995:638) defines reading as "the process by which information is extracted from written or printed text". It goes on to say that this process is extremely complex and is dependent on two critical aspects, namely 1) the written format of the word and the reader's ability to decode the phonetic relationships between the letters on the page and the sounds of the spoken language, and 2) a semantic/syntactic process that has to do with the meaning of the words which are being pronounced.

Reading is a lifelong activity. Those who enjoy reading derive pleasure and satisfaction from it. Adigun and Oyelude (2003: 60) observe that skills in reading will not only assist pupils in organising their thoughts and jotting down important facts while reading, but also equip them for comprehending entire texts.

Adewole (2001: 55) asserts that the aim of any reading programme is to lay a strong foundation that can benefit pupils throughout their lives in academic pursuits. Phillips (1997: 10), commenting on the numbers of literate pupils in primary schools, notes that about 57 percent of the population over age six is literate, that is, can read and write with understanding in at least one language. The literacy rate is higher among the male population (about 66 percent). While the literacy rate ranges between 50 and 82 percent in the southern states, the rate in most of the northern states (excluding Kaduna and Katsina) ranges from 32 to 50 percent. Adigun and Oyelude (2003: 25) conducted research on the use of the public library in selected locations in Ibadan, with the aim of exploring reading habits and general attitudes towards reading and acquisition of skills in reading.

Reading is a crucial form of communication through which we get most of the information required in teaching and learning situations and in everyday life. Krashen (1993:88) indicates that we learn to read by reading, not through drill and practice, but by free volition, and in this way learners become readers.

Reading is the recognition of printed or written symbols, which serve as stimuli for the recall of meanings accumulated through the reader's past experience. It has also been described as a process of translating alphabetical symbols into a form of language from which the native speaker has already derived the meaning. According to Lawal (1996: 32), readers use the symbols to guide the recovery of information from their repertoires and subsequently use this information to construct interpretations of the message. Adewole (2001: 70) describes the "critical reading skills" which students need to read, explore and appreciate a literary text effectively. The ability to read is a crucial skill for information retrieval (Dike, 2006).

2.3 A developmental perspective on reading

The skills necessary for the reading process do not all develop at the same time. In this regard, consideration was given to Chall, Jacobs and Baldwin's stages of reading development (1990: 15).

According to this model, the kind of thinking required for understanding and learning from texts changes with developmental age. The model describes six stages through which the reading process develops from learning to read to reading to learn. Stage 0 is the pre-reading stage (from birth to age 6) and stage 5 is the level of the mature, skilled reader (from age 18 onwards).

In Stages 1 (birth to age 6) and 2 (ages 5 - 9) of this model, the emphasis is on learning to read. The characteristic of these readers is that they "... learn the alphabetical principle, letter-sound relationships, recognise high-frequency words and read simple texts, mainly narratives"(Chall et al., 1990:10). Another characteristic is the fact that decoding skills are strengthened and the reading of simple words becomes more automated. Listening comprehension is also a skill being developed. At this stage, decoding and comprehension and reading rate are all equally important skills for the child to master, in order to become an effective reader later on. The teaching of reading during this stage will focus on developing and improving all three of these skills.

From Stage 3 (ages 10 - 14) onwards, the emphasis shifts to reading to learn. The texts to which the reader is exposed go beyond what she/he already knows, both linguistically and cognitively. The child is reading from textbooks and reference notes and needs to be able to understand the text, integrate the information in the text and apply critical thinking skills. Chall et al's (1990: 20) study on the development of reading skills shows that if adequate reading abilities are not acquired during Stage 3, the consequences are severe. "Stage 3 reading skills are crucial to later academic success... Reading science and social texts becomes an almost impossible task for students who cannot read on a Stage 3 level" (Chall et al, 1990:10). At this stage, decoding is no longer the focus and the ability to read effectively relies heavily on reading comprehension skills. It is interesting to note that at this level in our schools (i.e. age 10 upwards), no further formal reading instruction is given. It is assumed by the teacher that these children have mastered the mechanics of decoding and pronunciation, and that they are able to read to learn.

Rosen (1961:104), in her study conducted with primary school readers, states that " ... whereas at the earlier stages of schooling, pronunciation, comprehension and rate of reading may be regarded as equally important in assessing reading competence, as the child grows older the importance contoured by each may vary". This is supported by Pretorius (2000: 30), who notes that when children move into the higher developmental stages of grade four onwards, they start engaging more in meaning construction and gradually move away from the more automated element-by-element processing of information. At this stage, comprehension would need to carry a heavier weight when assessing overall reading ability.

2.4 Reading problems in English as a second language

Francis (2000:1) defines reading problems as a "breakdown in the communication between the reader and the author". He refers to a reading problem as being the presence of one or more error in the brain's neurological network, which entirely directs the interactive, predictive, integrative, mental process called "reading". Reading ability is likely to be worsened by the weakness in the reader's intention to read.

Gagne (2006:1 - 2) regards reading dyslexia as the condition in which an individual has no specific physical or mental limitations, but has difficulty reading age-appropriate material. These reading problems have nothing to do with intelligence or ability, but rather with how the person processes the print. He indicates that learners therefore struggle with reading because they lack the necessary skills. Gagne (2006:1-3) identifies general reading problems as the inability to process print phonetically, which includes whole word type errors, word guessing and memorising texts, not processing print phonologically, the inability to read simple phonetic words, poor spelling skills, lack of knowledge of the phonemic code, not sounding out words, and reading with much effort. Furthermore, gaps in foundation skills in reading, as well as in proficiency in phonological processing, are developed among learners if the following are present: poor phonemic awareness, choppy sounding out or inability to blend smoothly, improper direction tracking, gaps in direct knowledge of the complete phonemic code, and not paying attention to details.

Brist (2002:1) suggests that reading problems can be identified by a number of symptoms, such as reversing letters or words, omitting letters, losing one's place when reading, not reading fluently, or reading inaccurately, remembering little of what one has read, and reading with poor comprehension. He adds that learners with reading disabilities fall behind very rapidly in nearly all school subjects. They are likely to develop negative concepts of themselves and lose the motivation to succeed. They have limited access to the rich world found in books. Lastly, (Learning RX) states that "weak auditory processing skills are the major cause of struggles for learners who read and spell below grade level. He further explained that English language is difficult to learn because it is made up of 43 phonemes, 26 consonants and 17 vowels but only uses 26 letter symbols to represent those sounds. Furthermore, to learners with weak auditory or cognitive skills, this is a complex system with rules that makes learning to read and spell one of the most difficult tasks a child can encounter".

Donald et al. (2007:307) explain that reading disability is one of the learning difficulties that can be caused either by visual or auditory problem, which implies that a learner with eye sight or hearing problems might find reading problematic, in comparison with a learner without any of these problems. Memory also plays a major role in learning to read because reading start with memorising letters, and knowing visual shapes and their relationship to sounds in spoken form. Through the researcher's experience as an educator, during the intermediate phase, learners have no background to letter sound or phonic information. This information comes from the visual shapes and order of letters in written words.

According to Donald et al. (2006:310), information is found in the grammatical structure of language because reading involves understanding the flow of written language, its form and grammar, which have to be understood and used. Some learners come from homes in which a language other than English is spoken. This causes a problem when it comes to reading English, due to a limited exposure to the English language. According to the National Reading Panel (2000: 4), children who learn the sound-symbol system of English read better than children who have not mastered this skill.

The shortage of resources for teaching learners to read is also a problem (National Reading Strategy, 2008:17), as readers need access to good reading material, and learners need access to appropriate reading books throughout the school year. Educators are sometimes not trained to teach basic reading in the intermediate phase, and therefore do not know how to help struggling readers.

2.5 Factors which influence reading

When investigating reading and its role in academic achievement, it is important to consider the various factors which could influence reading. The reader does not exist within a vacuum and the process of reading consists of more than just a reader reading a written text. This section will consider the various factors influencing reading.

2.5.1 Language

A child uses language to express himself and acquires knowledge and information through language, be it written or spoken. His level of language proficiency will, therefore, strongly influence his potential to learn, because it is a prerequisite for his ability to read. In a multilingual country such as South Africa, this has obvious ramifications. Many of the children in our schools are being taught in a language which is their second or even third language. If the language of instruction is not the child's mother tongue, then s/he is less able to use the richness and depth of mother-tongue knowledge to enhance the reading experience. Pretorius (2000: 27) points out that there are many black pupils in our schools who have the necessary decoding skills to read English text, but whose reading comprehension skills are poorly developed. Unfortunately, this has negative implications for learning because a reader's vocabulary needs to have been developed to the point where s/he will be able to understand what is being read.

2.5.2 Physical and intellectual development

Grove and Hauptfleisch (2000: 4) state that the child "... should be physically capable of making progress at school". In other words, his hearing and sight should be such that he is able to discriminate between different sounds, letters and words.

Similarly, his speech needs to be sufficiently developed to reproduce the sounds in the language in order to form the words. Intellectually, the child needs to be capable of both auditory and visual perception. Grove and Hauptfleisch (2000:2) note that, visually, the child needs to be able to compare, classify and identify similarities and differences. On the auditory level, he needs to be able to hear differences and similarities between sounds, letters and words.

2.5.3 Emotional development for reading English among grade four learners

Grove and Hauptfleisch (2000:5) state that "for reading readiness self-confidence and emotional adaptability are essential". If forced to read prematurely, the child may well develop a negative attitude towards reading. S/he will start to associate feelings of anxiety and fear with reading, as well as feelings of inability and inadequacy. The challenge for teachers and parents alike is to generate a love for and enjoyment of reading in children, so that it becomes an activity that is associated with pleasure and emotional security. The role of attitude and motivation cannot be overlooked.

2.5.4 Socio-cultural background to reading English among grade four learners

The home environment of the reader is likely to have an influence on his reading ability, as well as on his attitude towards reading. The attitude of parents towards reading can play a significant role. If parents themselves read, if they make age-appropriate reading material available to their children, and if they are actively involved in and supportive of their child's reading, it is likely that the child will develop a positive attitude toward reading. Trelease (1990: 1) indicates that parents who read aloud to their children on a daily basis help improve children's reading abilities, as well as their imagination. In a similar vein, a home environment that is stable, secure and supportive makes it easier for the learner to invest energy in an activity such as reading. A learner from an emotionally deprived disintegrated and possibly abusive home environment, on the other hand, is going to be more concerned about his survival and emotional security. Investing energy in reading may well seem foreign to such a child, if not impossible.

In her research on early literacy skills in African-American children, Washington (2001: 10) notes that children from homes characterised by poverty, lack of stability, inadequate nutrition and medical care, and inconsistency in care are subject to levels of environmental stress that can affect their functioning. As a result, they enter school with decreased world knowledge, which in turn can affect their language skills and influence their experience with books.

The learner's cultural experience can also influence his reading behaviour. For example, many of the black learners in our schools have a largely oral cultural heritage, as opposed to a reading cultural heritage. Pretorius (2000: 9) notes that these children are very seldom exposed to storybook reading and have very little experience of the printed word before starting their formal schooling. Books are not an integral part of their lives and this can make learning to read a difficult task. Nel (1995: 65) indicates that cultural factors can also influence gender expectations with regard to reading. In some cultures, boys are expected to engage in non-academic activities, and to be active and less attentive. The result is that less focus is placed on reading and reading difficulties than would possibly be the case with girls.

2.5.5 Educational factors in reading English among grade four learners

Even although school is usually the place where most children learn to read, it needs to be acknowledged that the school environment itself can also hinder a child's reading development. Teachers who are critical, judgmental, sarcastic and rejecting can have a strong negative influence on the motivation of children in their classes. If a struggling reader is criticised for his slow pace or inaccuracy in articulation, he will be less likely to keep trying, for fear of further ridicule. Under these circumstances, it is much easier for the child to simply give up and be given the label of 'unable to read'. The path of least resistance may well be the one which feels safer and less traumatic. Sadly, the label often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and these children then come to expect their reading behaviour to be a 'failure'. It can also happen that the teacher provides the child with reading material which is too difficult or too advanced or, in some cases, too easy. In all of these cases, the reader ends up frustrated and/or bored.

French (1999:8) points out that the interest of the reader in the reading material and motivations to complete a reading task are important factors in the reading process. If the material is interesting and age- and contextually- appropriate, it is more likely that the reader will engage with it and be encouraged to read further.

Given the pressures in many of the classrooms in our country today, it does happen that a reader experiencing difficulty simply does not receive the extra individual help which she/he may need. With high teacher to pupil ratios in some classrooms, and with under-qualified teachers in others, it is very often physically impossible for the teacher to render the assistance which is needed. Consequently, the struggling reader continues to struggle.

2.6 Methods of teaching reading to grade four learners

It is very common in a classroom situation to find both slow and fast learners. Some are good in reading, while others are poor readers. In this kind of situation, it all depends on the teacher's use of methods of teaching reading which will help the poor readers.

Unfortunately, most of the teachers do not have adequate knowledge about how to help such learners with special needs. The kind of training that teachers receive does not adequately prepare them to handle all pupils according to their needs. Most pupils require close supervision if they are to perform better in academic work. As a result, even when the teacher knows that a particular pupil is a poor reader, s/he is not in a position to help (Kalindi, 2005: 6).

Based on this scenario, it can be said that teachers use the same method of teaching for all pupils in a classroom, regardless of their reading ability. All the necessary materials can be available, but this will not help improve the skills of poor readers as long as the teacher, who is the key person in this whole process, is not competent enough to help the poor readers (Kalindi, 2005: 9). This means that poor readers are not given a chance to improve themselves where reading is concerned. The good readers have an advantage in this case, while the poor readers are left behind in the learning process.

Teaching normally starts with the smallest and easiest things, and children learn to read and write longer and more complicated words as time goes by (Lyytinen, 2006: 10). Learning to read is therefore a gradual process. Today, a child will learn to read letters in the alphabet, the next day s/he will be able to read words, then sentences, and so on.

It is important to note that most teachers work under harsh conditions, such as attending to numerous classes in a day, too many pupils in one classroom, inadequate reading materials, and irregular attendance at school by pupils (MoE, 1992). Furthermore, there are no incentives to motivate the teachers, especially those in remote areas. As a result, such teachers will have no drive to concentrate on poor readers. It is up to the pupil whether s/he has understood or not. The methods of classroom approaches to reading , such as the 'look and say' method, have resulted in most primary school pupils' level of reading in English being inadequate for learning to take place (Kalindi, 2005: 15).

There is also the Primary Reading Programme (PRP), whose aim is to provide child-centred classroom instruction. However, it has not been easy to attain this goal due to the high number of pupils in classrooms, hence making it difficult for teachers to offer education on a one-to- one basis for those children with special needs (Matafwali, 2005: 43). The classrooms are just too crowded, which increases the stress level of teachers. This places those pupils with special needs at a disadvantage, since teachers are too tired to concentrate on such pupils on an individual basis, as mentioned earlier.

In order to help learners to read and write, teachers need to teach learners how to read every time they are in the classroom. Giving learners sufficient time to read can help them, as well as making provision for an extra reading hour. There is evidence that reading books orally to children several times and explaining 5-10 word meanings while reading can be effective with primary school children (See Biemiller, in press). The researcher suggests that grade 4 teachers devote at least 30 minutes a day to developing vocabulary, since building vocabulary is very important in teaching reading.

According to Briemiller (2003:330), vocabulary learning differs in several crucial ways from learning other reading-related skills. There are some crucial but limited sets of literacy skills that, once learned, can be used throughout life.

Alphabetical names and sounds

- Knowledge of the alphabetic principle will enable learners to develop the ability to read words in isolation and in text. The relationship between the alphabetic principle and phonics is that it will enable learners to recognise letters of the alphabet and how they relate to phonics. As children learn their alphabet and begin to read, so their phonemic and phonological awareness improves (Hadaway, 2005:11-17).
- Syllables are where the learners learn to combine two letters. After this, learners must form words by combining syllables. According to Allington (2002:84), the teacher gives all the children the magnetic letters or letter cards, **a**, **t**, **p**, **s**, and **b**. He or she then puts **a** and **t** together to make **at** and instructs the children to do the same. The teacher then models placing **b** at the beginning of the word **at** to make **bat**. S/he next asks the children to replace the **b** with a **p** to make **pat** and then to reverse the **t** and **p** to make **tap**. The lesson continues with the teacher modelling many words, eventually increasing the number of letters in the words. The children are also provided with opportunities to make their own words. Learners must then start to make sentences, and should be given time to read every day. This can help them to learn more vocabulary. These skills provide the basis for sound curriculum decisions and instructional approaches that can help prevent the predictable consequences of early reading failure. It describes the findings of the National Reading Panel Report and provides an analysis and discussion in five areas of reading instruction.
- The alphabetic principle is by far the most debated area in beginning reading. These debates have a rich history, with many seminal publications attempting to resolve them (Adams, 1990:81; Chall, 1987:81, as cited in NRP, 2000:81).

The heart of the debate has usually centred around which method (e.g., phonics) is best for teaching alphabetic principles, or the sequence of that teaching (e.g. before formal reading instruction). However, most would arguably agree that the alphabetic principle is an integral part of beginning reading, that is, the notion of how sounds map onto print is essential in reading. In terms of the reciprocity of beginning reading, knowledge of the alphabetic principle is necessary to learn to read, yet this knowledge is also strengthened as children begin to read (National Literacy Trust, 2006:4).

In order to help learners to read and write, the following strategies need to be used: phonics, vocabulary, text comprehension, fluency, and making of words.

2.6.1 Phonics and their role in reading among grade four learners

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

Stahl (2004:35), using language borrowed from Durkin, defines phonics as ‘any approach in which the teacher does or says something to help children learn how to decode words’. There are numerous approaches to teaching phonics, but these can be classified into two broad groups, namely *analytic and synthetic* (Stahl, 2004:57). The synthetic approaches begin with learning letter sound relationships and blending them to create words, eg. **C/a/t** then **cat** (Bald, 2007: 18).

Furthermore, the NRP report suggests that phonics instruction is most effective in the first grade. In considering the most effective way to teach phonics, Stahl and Duffy – Hester (2004:598) propose the following principles for good phonics instruction:

- It should develop phonological awareness
- It should provide a thorough grounding to letters
- It should not teach rules or use worksheets
- It should not dominate instruction and does not have to be boring
- It should provide sufficient practice in reading words
- It should lead to automatic word recognition.

2.6.2 Vocabulary of grade four learners

If one accepts that comprehension is the goal of reading, then vocabulary is the foundation of reading comprehension, and refers to the body of words one needs to communicate effectively. This includes knowing the meaning of the words and how to pronounce them correctly. If a learner has a limited understanding of vocabulary, he or she will have a limited understanding of the concept, which in turn will limit understanding of the content. As beginning readers, children have to make sense out of words they see in print. Educational researchers, such as Raphael, Pardo and Highfield (2002:107), have also found a strong correlation between reading and vocabulary knowledge, which means that learners who have a large vocabulary are usually good readers. Vocabulary can also be learned incidentally during storybook reading or when listening to others. If one reads extensively, one is likely to be or become a good reader. Children also need to recognise the shape of words and the letters and syllables that make up the words (Stahl, 200:63).

2.6.3 Text comprehension of grade four learners

Comprehension is the main reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, then they are not reading. Research has shown that instruction in comprehension can help learners understand and remember what they are reading, and communicate with others about what they have read.

Comprehension can be improved by teaching children to use specific concrete strategies or to reason strategically when they encounter barriers to understanding what they read. Comprehension skills can be achieved through cooperative learning, question and answer sessions, generating questions around a text, and by using pictures, drawing and graphs (Kuhn, 2003:33). Fluency is the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy and proper expression. Fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension, and can be achieved through repeated oral reading with teachers, peers or parents. Feedback is essential to learners, whether or not their reading is as expected, and they should be encouraged to read silently on their own at school and at home. The more children read, the more their reading skills will improve and the more their world view will broaden (Morrow, 2005:23-24).

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

Many enjoyable games can be played using flashcards involving the repetition of the word. Isolated word practice will improve the speed and therefore the fluency of reading more than the practice of connected text. McEwan (2002: 56) also argues that connecting an action to a new word will solidify its place in the learner's brain. Therefore, teachers must actively involve every learner, not just appealing to their brains, but also to their bodies.

Reading instruction cannot be measured in time spent on reading, but finds its value in focused intentional efforts and fluency building programmes in a language-rich environment.

2.6.4 Fluency in reading among grade four learners

Fluency is the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy and proper expression. Fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension, and can be achieved through repeated oral reading with teachers, peers or parents. Feedback is essential to learners, regardless of whether or not their reading is as expected, and they should be encouraged to read silently on their own at school and at home. The more children read, the more their reading skills will improve and the more their world view will broaden (Morrow, 2005: 23-24). McEwan (2002:89) has explored fluency and its relationship with a good sight word vocabulary, and concludes that it can be improved in various ways, but that the key approach should be aimed at enlarging the learner's sight word vocabulary. Research shows that practice in reading single words leads to increased fluency when those words are later found in connected texts. Many words can be learned through simple flashcard recognition and many enjoyable games can be played with flashcards, games which involve the repetition of words.

2.7 A modern, technology-driven world

Today's children live in a world of instant information and seemingly limitless entertainment. Much of the entertainment is in the form of television, television games, computer games, handheld arcade-type games and so on. And although there is nothing intrinsically 'wrong' with any of these, they all require very little effort on the part of the individual. Any effort entailed is usually the simple pushing of buttons. In contrast to this, reading as a form of entertainment requires more effort, more imagination and longer periods of time. For these reasons, it will not be appealing to many members of this 'instant generation'. It will not be the first choice of many young people, for whom reading becomes an activity that one does only under duress and for school purposes.

Research has also shown that from a physiological viewpoint, watching television can have a negative effect on reading because the two activities make demands on differing brain functions (Robinson, 2001:45). The skill needed to watch television (namely, the formation of global visual representations) is more effortless than the more complex visual and cognitive processes involved in reading.

2.8 How to help learners with reading problems in English

Learning to read is a long process that requires patience from both the learner and the teacher. Therefore, expecting a learner to read fluently in a second language (English) requires double effort, as there are many challenges compared to when a learner has to read in his/her mother tongue. This is supported by Donald et al (2002:196), who state that a fundamental and uncontested understanding in educational psychology is that language thinking and therefore learning are all closely related.

According to the Teachers' Handbook (2008:33), reading difficulties need to be diagnosed early. Diagnostic tests should be done every month in the first year (grades four and five), and letter sounds in English need to be re-taught. Educators also need to receive training, development and support. The National Reading Strategy (2008:13) support this by saying that in order to support teacher development, accredited training courses in strategies for teaching reading will be offered at tertiary institutions. Resources must be provided by the Department of Education, e.g. reading materials such as books, magazines and even comics.

To work out a solution to reading problems, Francis (2000:4) suggests the use of vocabulary, language structure, cadence, sound and symbols while reading. Gagne (2006:4) advises that direct phonemic awareness training is a significant step towards the development of a positive impact on reading and spelling as a means to develop proficiency in reading. In addition, Gagne suggests that direct phonic systematic programmes are the most effective approach for teaching children to read. This will help to develop correct phonologic processing pathways and build proficient reader skills.

Supplementary to the development of reading proficiency, Gagne (2006:3) proposes that learners should be taught how to break long words into syllables and learn about common affixes. Learners with poor comprehension can begin with guided reading and specific lactations to develop comprehension skills. Teachers should help learners with limited vocabulary, in order to expand their vocabulary knowledge. Learners with a lack of fluency can be built up by automatic fast reading through repeated correct phonological processing.

Brist (2002:2) recommends that before good reading becomes possible, the following basic skills are required, for example: concentration, visual discrimination, perception and memorising, skills of association, auditory memory and interpretation of position in space. These are all the functions that form the foundation of good reading and spelling. Landsberg (2008:167) indicates that “parents should provide teachers with information regarding the children language development such as how old they were when they confronted with a new language, who they communicate with at home, whether they are exposed to reading materials and television”.

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, reading problems in English as a second language were discussed, as well as the factors which influence reading, methods of teaching reading and how to help children with reading problems in English. It also gave a brief historical background to reading and looked at how reading is addressed in South Africa, in order to identify reading problems. Different reading methods were also highlighted.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As stated in previous chapters, the purpose of this study is to explore teachers' experiences with regard to poor reading among Grade four learners at Hlanganani South circuit schools. This study is an investigation geared towards answering the research questions regarding teachers' experiences and perceptions of teaching reading in Grade four classrooms.

This chapter gives an overview of the research methodology, methods and tools that will be used in this study. The first section of this chapter looks at the research design and discusses the research setting in which the study is located. Secondly, the researcher describes the approach and methods which shaped and informed the study. Finally, the third section reports on sampling, validity, ethics, data analysis and the limitations of the study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1 Interpretive paradigm

The methodology that was adopted in this study was interpretive, which gave the researcher an opportunity to understand and to be able to handle the topic of the research. It also allowed her to understand that teachers and learners interact with each other, giving meaning to what they are doing and why they are doing it. This paradigm helped the researcher to understand and interpret teachers' actions when teaching reading to Grade four learners. The interpretive paradigm, according to Jackson (2003:67), involves interpreting and understanding human action. The actions of the teachers and learners must be interpreted in order to understand their purpose. In this case, the researcher observed teachers' actions when teaching reading and tried to understand what and how they taught reading through their actions, rather than judging them. Through this observation, the researcher was able to see and understand their actions when teaching reading in their classrooms.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2003: 23) also contend that interpretive researchers begin with individuals and attempt to understand their interpretations of the world around them, claiming that the interpretive paradigm works directly with the experience and understanding of the theories that emerge as more information is generated during the research process. This study was empirical in the sense that the research relied on the collection of evidence about what was happening on the ground (in this case, in Grade 4 classrooms). Bassey (1999: 40) also argues that interpretive research is a category of empirical research because it focuses on data collection. In light of the above, the researcher wanted to interpret and give meaning to the data that she collected on the experiences of teachers of Grade four learners. These are the attributes of a qualitative approach.

Henning (2004:31) rightly states that “interpretive research is fundamentally concerned with meaning and it seeks to understand social members’ definitions and understanding of situations. The interpretive paradigm does not concern itself with the search for broadly applicable laws and rules, but rather seeks to produce descriptive analyses that emphasize deep, interpretive understanding of social phenomena”. This ties in with the focus of this study, because its purpose was to gain an in-depth understanding of individual participants’ experience and perceptions about how learners grapple with reading in the foundation phase.

According to Garrick (1999: 149), fundamental assumptions of the interpretive paradigm include the following: firstly, individuals are not considered to be passive vehicles in social, political and historical affairs, but have certain inner capabilities which can allow for individual judgments, perceptions and decision-making autonomy (agency). Secondly, there is the belief that any event or action is explainable in terms of multiple interacting factors, events and processes, and that causes and effects are mutually interdependent. Thirdly, there is an acceptance of the extreme difficulty in attaining complete objectivity, especially in observing human subjects who confuse and make sense of events based on their individual system of meaning.

Fourthly, there is the view that the aim of inquiry is to develop an understanding of individual cases, rather than universal laws or predictive generalisations. Fifthly, there is the view that the world is made up of multi-faceted realities that are best studied as a whole, recognizing the significance of the context in which experience occurs. Lastly, there is the recognition that inquiry is always value-laden and that such values inevitably influence the framing, focusing and conducting of research. These assumptions underlie all elements of this research, which sought to understand the experiences of Grade four teachers regarding the reading problems and challenges faced by learners.

3.2.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research, as defined by Creswell (1994: 2), is “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of information, and conducted in a social setting”. The issue to be understood in this study is the experience of Grade four teachers with regard to the problems faced by their learners when it comes to reading. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning that people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences that they have in it (Merriam, 2009: 13).

In other words, qualitative research is concerned with the meaning of human behaviour and experiences, and of its social functions. This view is further advanced by Merriam (2001: 12), who defines qualitative research as “an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible.” McMillan and Schumacher (1997:87) describe the characteristics of qualitative research as follows:

- Qualitative research is concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participant’s perspective.
- Qualitative research believes that human actions are strongly influenced by the setting in which they occur.

- Qualitative research has great flexibility in terms of both the methods and the research process.

Based on these views, the researcher considered the classroom as a social setting. A wealth of human behaviour is exhibited there, which has social functions, and it is the aim of the study to explore these functions. The point here is that this study strove to analyse the qualitative nature of teaching based on the teachers' experiences and beliefs. To capture this quality, the data was collected in a natural setting, without pre-conceived ideas or biases being introduced as a result of the methods used. Both the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative research methodology that will be applied in this study will lead the researcher to focus her research by using a case study.

3.2.3 Case study

Case studies involve gaining an in-depth understanding of a situation and its meaning for those involved (Merriam, 2001: 4). Case studies are appropriate in terms of collecting data during a given period. In this study, an arrangement was made with the selected schools as to when the data could be collected. Case studies, however, have different definitions, which may be confusing. For instance, Lincoln and Guba (1995: 360) claim that while "the literature is replete with references and with examples of case study reports, there seems to be little agreement about what a case study is". However, in this study, two schools are selected as a case study.

Yin (2003: 5) defines a case study as an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." This study has clear boundaries, as indicated in chapter one. Stake (1995: 3) defines a case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances." In other words, the case study is a way of investigating an empirical topic by following a set of pre-specified procedures, as is the case with this study.

In conclusion, the researcher used the case study method because she dealt with a single case, focusing on a specific grade and a specific number of participants. This study helped to develop an understanding of how teachers manage the teaching of reading in Grade 4 classrooms.

3.3 SAMPLING

De Vos et al. (2003:199) explain that “a sample consist of the elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study...or it is a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons that together comprise the subject of a study”. In this study, two schools were chosen from a district comprising 11 schools. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:169-176), there are two types of sampling: probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is classified into four groups, namely simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified random sampling and cluster sampling. Non-probability sampling is classified into three groups, namely convenience sampling, purposive sampling and quota sampling. In this study, the researcher used only one type of sampling, namely purposive sampling.

Tobias (2006:25) defines a population as the target group that one intends to study. In the same manner, Muvirimi (2002:44) explains that “in research one can study a small group to unveil something about a large group of individuals”. The large group is referred to as a population. The population in this study consists of two government schools in the Hlanganani South circuit. From this population, two schools that are typically poor were selected as a sample (12 participants). The sample consisted of six teachers from each of the two selected schools.

Galloway (2005:1) defines a purposive sample as “a sample selected in a deliberative and nonrandom fashion to achieve a certain goal. This sampling is based on the judgment of the researcher regarding the characteristics of a representative sample. It is chosen on the basis of what the researcher considers to be typical units” (Bless & Smith, 2000:92). This is also confirmed by Nardi (2003:107).

In this study, random sampling was used in conjunction with purposive sampling, in order to select the two schools from the circuit. The participants were also purposively selected to represent the entire population, since they are regarded as typical of all members of the population.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Awori (2003:58), ethical considerations “are paramount in any type of research”. Apart from protecting the informants, the following research ethics also enabled the researcher to retain a good relationship with the informants and increase the credibility of the study, as quoted: “Educational researchers conducting research within a broad array of settings and institution, including schools, colleges, universities, hospitals and prisons.

It is of foremost importance that educational researchers respect the right, privacy, dignity and sensitivities of their research populations and also the integrity of the institutions within which the research occurs”. The researcher assured the participants, through written documentation, that she would observe and respect their rights, privacy and sensitivities.

3.4.1 Informed consent (Individual permission)

Macmillan and Schumacher (2001:197) explain that informed consent is achieved by providing participants with an explanation of the research, as well as giving them a form to be signed as an indication of their understanding and willingness to participate in the research. Heaton (2004:77) also supports the fact that the participants need to be given the consent forms prior to participation, in order for them to decide whether or not to participate. The participants were also asked for their permission to be tape-recorded during interviews.

In this study, the researcher designed consent letters for teachers to sign when indicating their agreement. The researcher and participants were also allowed to talk to each other in advance so they could share information regarding the interview. This was done in order to find out whether or not they were willing to participate.

They were encouraged and motivated not to be afraid, but to feel free to express themselves during interviews.

3.4.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

In this study, the participants were guaranteed confidentiality and were given pseudo-names and codes, which were used in the presentation of findings from interviews. For example, the identities of the teachers of school A and B were not disclosed. The researcher also explained to the participants that their responses would be taped-recorded and the information kept confidential for the purpose of the study, and that it would not be disclosed to anyone.

It is essential to conduct qualitative research in an ethical manner. Stake (1995, as cited in Merriam, 2001: 101) maintains that “qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world.” It is important for a researcher to be aware of the ethical considerations and dilemmas that may be encountered, because s/he is entering people’s private lives when doing research. These considerations typically include privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, which are guaranteed by informed consent. In order to address these ethical issues, the researcher wrote letters to the principals asking for permission to work with them and the teachers in the selected schools. Lastly, the researcher contacted the teachers for their informed consent. When permission had been granted, the participants were informed that all the information gathered would be treated with respect and confidentiality.

3.5 TECHNIQUES AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The researcher used the following tools to collect data: interviews and classroom observation. She selected these tools because they are directed by the research questions. The researcher wanted to find out from the participants how they teach and their beliefs and perceptions about teaching reading. The researcher viewed the tools as guiding principles towards interpreting the information gathered. These tools would inform the researcher of the interactive process between teachers and learners.

The tools were further intended to highlight the qualitative nature of these interactions and helped in understanding the 'why' and 'how' of the teaching process in Grade four classrooms.

3.5.1 Interviews

O' Leary (2004: 27) defines interviews as "the interaction between the interviewer and a single interviewee ... is one-on-one interaction which allows the researcher to have control over the process and the interviewee to have the freedom to express his or her thoughts". Bell (1994: 101) also describes an interview as a conversation between the interviewer and the respondent, with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondent. Cantrell (1993: 83) observes that interviews allow the collection of data in "the subjects' own words thereby affording the researcher an opportunity to discover perceptions, interpretations and the meaning which they give to their actions."

In this study, the researcher interviewed six teachers from each school, using semi-structured interview questions. Cohen et al. (2000: 279) view the semi-structured interview as one in which the content and procedures are organised in advance. The sequence is determined by means of a schedule. The researcher also prepared the interview questions in advance, studied them and started practicing how to conduct the interview. When conducting interviews, one needs to be aware of the fact that there are some problems that could be encountered. O'Leary (2004), for instance, notes that:

- Participants can go off track by giving irrelevant answers, requiring the interviewer to redirect them to the questions asked;
- The tape-recorder may give problems during the interview; and
- There may be nervousness at the beginning, because one is dealing with three things at the same time. Firstly, one is trying to listen to the interviewees. Secondly, one is attempting to question or probe in order to gather the best data. Lastly, one is trying to manage the process so that one knows how much time has passed and how much time is left.

In spite of these problems, the interview as a tool of research has several advantages. According to O'Leary (2004), interviews allow for greater depth, one can probe for clarity, and respondents become more involved when responding to questions. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) contend that people are willing to open up more when talking than when writing. The disadvantage of interviews is that they are prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer and can distort what the respondents really mean (Cohen et al., 2000).

For the purpose of affirming the literature review, interviews were used as a tool. Collin (in De Vos, 2002:298) defines 'interview' as a social interaction in which meaning is negotiated between a numbers of individuals.

According to De Vos (2002:298-303), one of the types of interviews that can be identified is a semi-structured interview, which seeks to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs, perceptions or accounts of a particular topic, and allows researchers and participants much more flexibility

For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews were considered to be appropriate because the researcher was interested in understanding the experience of Grade four teachers with regard to reading ability among Grade four learners. One-to-one interviews will be conducted with the participants after school hours, so that the normal teaching hours will not be disrupted. The interviews will take between 45 minutes to an hour, until the data has been saturated. The interviews will be audio-taped and afterwards transcribed by the researcher, with the permission of the participants.

Semi-structured interviews

Cohen, Manion and Morrisson (2000:279) view the semi-structured interview as one in which the content and procedures are organised in advance. They provide the researcher with an opportunity to ask individually tailored questions and do not limit the field of inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:107). Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtler (2010:124) write that semi-structured interviews are clearly identified as interviews, with

specific times, dates and topics identified in advance. The researcher carefully planned the interviews before conducting them, and made the necessary arrangements in advance with the participants regarding when to conduct them.

3.5.2 Classroom observations

Merriam (2001: 101) argues that observations are the major means of collecting data in qualitative research. She further states that they offer a firsthand account of the situation under investigation and when combined with interviews and document analysis, allow for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated. McMillan and Schumacher (1997: 268) contend that observation is very different from interviews and questionnaires. They argue that the observation method relies on a researcher seeing, hearing and recording things which are happening in the classroom situation. Kumar (2005:118) views observation as one way to collect primary data. It is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place.

The researcher has selected observation techniques to observe the following:

- To look at the learning classroom environment in order to see whether there are any reading corners.
- To determine whether the available materials are displayed, including learners' work, on classroom walls, and whether or not they are sufficient as learning aids for the Grade four classes.
- To determine whether or not the school materials are appropriate for the targeted Grade four classes.
- To see how the teachers are managing the number of learners in the classroom. This is in order to determine whether or not the teacher-learner ratio is used correctly in the classroom, as officially prescribed by the Ministry of Education.
- To monitor how the techniques and approaches are used by teachers in developing reading skills among learners in three different Grades four classrooms.

- To observe the teachers and learners' interactions during reading lessons.

3.6 VALIDITY

Cohen et al. (2000: 115) define “validity as an important key to effective research.” They argue that validity addresses the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data; the extent of triangulation; and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher. McMillan and Schumacher (1997: 51) maintain that validity refers to the degree to which the explanation of a phenomenon matches the realities of the world. Validity is bound to the question: can someone believe my study? Threats to validity can come from many quarters. For example, the sample might be inadequate and questions might not be well formulated and structured. In order to minimize the threats to validity, Cohen et al. (2000: 117) stipulate the following:

- Choosing an appropriate time scale.
- Selecting an appropriate methodology for answering research questions.
- Selecting appropriate instrumentation for gathering the type of data required.

In order to validate the findings of this study, the researcher will ask the interviewees probing questions in order to get detailed responses. Yin (2003: 17) argues that any findings are likely to be convincing and accurate if they are based on several different sources of information. Therefore, the researcher will use more than one method (triangulation) in order to avoid threats to the validity of this study.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Merriam (2001: 145) contends that data analysis is the process of making sense of the data. According to her, this involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read. She further argues that data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, and between description and interpretation.

According to Henning et al. (2004:102), there are many different ways of analysing qualitative study results - for example, content analysis, grounded theory analysis, discourse analysis, narrative analysis, global analysis, conversation and ethno-methodological analysis, and computer-aided qualitative data analysis. They further explain that in working with qualitative data, a researcher has many options regarding how to convert the “raw” data to final patterns of meaning. This depends on the methodological structure of the inquiry and corresponding aim of the analysis procedures.

For the observation data analysis, the researcher will carefully study all the notes that will be taken during the classroom observation. The main headings observed and items noted will be identified and become the subject of interpretation, discussion and analysis. For the interviews data analysis, the researcher will present all the findings by writing down each question, followed by the answers to the question, from all the participating groups. Thereafter, the interpretation, discussion and analysis will be done.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the research methodology which will be used in this study, which is directed by the research questions within the framework of the interpretative paradigm. The data collection methods, namely the interviews and classroom observation, were also discussed. Problems, issues and risks related to using the research tools, as well as the issues of validity, ethics and sampling, were also explored.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the data collection and analysis, in order to present the research findings based on the key purpose of the study, namely the experience of grade four teachers with regard to reading competence, and to interpret the findings from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews and observations. The purpose of the study was to explore Grade four teachers' beliefs about the teaching of reading and to examine how their beliefs influence their practices in the classroom. From the findings, the researcher identified patterns and categorised them according to themes. These are presented in written and table form below.

In this chapter, the characteristics of the schools that participated in the study are tabulated, followed by observations based on their physical settings or locations, according to accessibility and infrastructure, condition and availability of resources, the culture of teaching and learning in the schools, and observations regarding classrooms, qualifications, and the profile and demographics of the participants. Lastly, the discussion of the findings obtained from the interviewed participants are explored and analysed. Themes from the data were directed by the research questions, as indicated in Chapter 1, which were as follows:

- What are teachers' perceptions of the causes of reading difficulties?
- Does the physical school environment have a negative effect on a learner's reading ability?
- What are the methods used by teachers in teaching reading to learners?
- What measures do teachers adopt to minimise reading difficulties?

4.2 THE VHEMBE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ORGANOGRAM

The District Department of Education is based in Thohoyandou. This district is divided into six cluster circuits, which are the following: Hlanganani, Soutpansberg, Thohoyandou, Sibasa, Malamulele and Mutale. The two schools participating in this study are located in the Hlanganani cluster circuit of Makhado municipality. This is an M Ed study and is restricted to two to three years. This period of time is an important constraint, which dictates that one must be realistic in terms of the scope and depth of the study, so that it can be finished within the given time frame.

In this regard, the researcher chose to conduct the research in two schools in different clusters, for the sake of diversity and variety. She also chose the number of participants that could be managed within the given period of study. Below is a detailed account of each of the two schools that were selected for this study.

4.3 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH SCHOOLS

In this study, interviews were conducted in two schools. The two research schools are situated in semi-rural areas and serve learners residing in the Hlanganani South circuit of the Makhado Municipality in the Vhembe district. In the Hlanganani South circuit, there are eleven primary schools. The researcher selected two schools, and then six grade four teachers in each school.

4.3.1 A brief description of the schools that participated in the study

4.3.1.1 School A

Location

School A is situated in the Makhado local municipality in Vhembe district. The municipality is made up of a number of urban and semi-rural areas. School A is located in a semi-rural area, about 2 kilometers east of the Hlanganani South circuit. This area is characterised by unemployment and poverty.

Infrastructure

School A is a primary school that consists of three phases, namely the foundation phase, which covers grade R to grade 3, the intermediate phase, which comprises grades 4-6, and the senior phase, which is grade 7. The school has two blocks with four classrooms each, one for the foundation phase, and one for the intermediate phase, as well as a principal's office, one office for the Head of Department (HOD), two offices for the School Management Team (SMT), and a staffroom. The medium of instruction is Xitsonga for Grade R-Grade 3. Learners switch to English as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards. The classes are neatly kept, with bulletin boards on the walls, a steel cupboard, a chalkboard, and a basin with a clean towel in front of each class. The school surroundings are also neat. There is one large playground for boys and girls and a schoolyard that is surrounded by palisade fencing, as well as running water. There are attractive flower gardens in front of the classrooms and a vegetable garden at the back of the schoolyard. There is a large carport next to the main entrance.

Human Resources

The school has approximately 300 learners and thirteen educators - one principal, one Head of Department (HOD), 3 senior teachers and eight educators (six female and two male teachers). The school has 8 members of its governing body (SGB), including two teacher representatives and one non-educator staff member.

Culture of teaching and learning

Teachers report at the school 15 minutes before the morning devotion, which lasts for 15 minutes. All learners assemble in front of the intermediate block for morning devotion. During the morning devotion, learners sing choruses, followed by a prayer and the singing of the national anthem. The principal talks to and motivates learners before they go to their classes. Thereafter, learners march to their classes together with their educators. Contact time between teachers and learners starts at 7H20 and ends at 13H15 for foundation phase learners and 13H40 for intermediate and senior phase learners. The teacher-pupil ratio in this school is 1:45.

The language used for teaching and learning is Xitsonga in the foundation phase and English in the intermediate and senior phases. The school closes at 14H30 from Monday to Friday.

4.3.1.2 School B

Location

School B is situated in the Makhado local municipality in Vhembe district. The municipality is made up of a number of urban and semi-rural areas. School B is located in a semi-rural area, about 3 kilometers west of the Hlanganani South circuit. The area is characterised by unemployment and poverty.

Infrastructure

School B is a primary school comprising three phases, namely the foundation phase, which covers grade R (also known as reception class) to grade three, the intermediate phase, which comprises grades 4 to 6, and the senior phase, which is grade 7. The school has four blocks with five classrooms each, one for the foundation phase and two for the intermediate phase, as well as a principal's office, deputy's office, two staffrooms and 4 mobile classes. The medium of instruction is Xitsonga for Grade R-Grade 3. Learners switch to English as medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards. The classes are neatly kept and have bulletin boards.

The buildings of the first two blocks are very old, but are well looked after and have been renovated. Built in-cupboards were observed in foundation phase classrooms, as well as a chalkboard, a basin with clean water, and a bucket of water in the classrooms. The school's surroundings are also neat. There are two blocks of pit toilets for boys and girls, one large playground for boys and girls, a windmill pump that supplies water for the whole school premises, and a schoolyard, which is surrounded by mesh wire fencing. There are vegetable gardens at the back of the schoolyard. There is a large carport at the main entrance.

Human Resources

The school has one principal, one deputy principal, two Heads of Department (HOD) and twelve educators (nine female and three male teachers). The school has 8 members in its governing body (SGB), including two teacher representatives and one non-educator staff member. The school has approximately 500 learners.

Culture of teaching and learning

Teachers report at the school 10 minutes before the morning devotion, which lasts for 15 minutes. All learners assemble in front of the intermediate block for morning devotion. At the morning devotion, learners sing choruses, followed by a prayer and the singing of the national anthem. Thereafter, learners march to their classes together with the educators. Contact time between teachers and learners starts at 7H20 and ends at 13H15 for foundation phase learners and 13H40 for intermediate and senior phase learners. The teacher-pupil ratio in this school is 1:45. The language used for teaching and learning is Xitsonga in the foundation phase and English in the intermediate and senior phases. The school closes each day at 14H30.

4.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

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

Table 1: Qualifications, profile and demographics of the participants

School	Teacher's Name	Professional qualifications	Gender	Teaching experience	Age	Home language
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A	T1	Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD) Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE)	Female	30	52	Xitsonga
B	T2	Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC), Further Higher Diploma in Education, B ED (Hons)	Male	33	50	Xitsonga
A	T3	Diploma in Education (SPTD) ACE	Female	20	47	Xitsonga
B	T4	Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC), Further Diploma in Education (FDE)	Female	15	45	Xitsonga
A	T5	Senior Teachers Diploma (STD) B TECH	Male	18	46	Venda
B	T6	Senior Primary Teachers Diploma (SPTD) ABET Certificate	Male	25	49	Xitsonga

4.4.1 Teachers' demographics and professional qualifications

Teacher 1 was professionally qualified, with a Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) and an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), suggesting that she might be good at teaching reading. Teacher 2 was professionally qualified, with a Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC), Further Higher Diploma in Education, and B ED (Hons) in Educational Management. However, he had upgraded his qualifications and obtained more up-to-date ones. He had a problem when teaching the language because he specialised in Geography and History. Teacher 3's teaching qualifications were a Senior Primary Teachers Diploma in Education (SPTD), and an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), specializing in Mathematics.

Teacher 4 had professional qualifications in the form of a Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC), followed by a Further Diploma in Education (FDE). However, the PTC may be outdated, and she might lack content knowledge about language teaching, since she studied when entrance requirements were only Grade 8 (Form 3 at the time). This could impact negatively on her teaching and learning of reading in the home language and could result in her adhering to old methods that might not produce good results. However, she had upgraded her qualifications and obtained the more up-to-date Further Diploma in Education (FDE).

Teacher 5 was also professionally qualified, with a Senior Teachers Diploma (STD), as well as B Tech. He might have been expected to experience teaching problems, as his qualifications lacked training in professional teaching methods for young learners. Teacher 6 was professionally qualified, with a Senior Teachers Diploma (SPTD), as well as Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Certification. He might be good in teaching reading.

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

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

Age: Teacher 1 was a 52 year-old Grade four teacher at School A. Teacher 2 was a Grade 4 teacher of 50 years of age at School B. Teacher 3 was a 47 year old teacher and had been teaching a Grade four class at School A. Teacher 4 was a 45 year old teacher and had been teaching a grade four class. Teacher 5 was 46 years old. Lastly, Teacher 6 was also one of the Grade four teachers at School B and was 49 years of age. Their ages thus ranged from 45 to 52 years old.

Teaching experience: In general, all the teachers were mature in age, with their teaching experience ranging from 15 to 33 years. Teacher 1, with the necessary qualifications and 33 years' teaching experience, seemed to have the longest service and a good track record. Teacher 1 had confidence, dedication and was also a good teacher. Teacher 6 was more knowledgeable and experienced with regard to identification of children's problems. Teacher 6 had 25 years' experience, which indicated that she was not a beginner. They all had a good reputation for teaching Grade four learners at their respective schools and none could be regarded as inactive or unproductive. All were very good, interested in their work and productive, and could be trusted with teaching reading to learners effectively.

4.4.2. Classroom factors impacting on the teaching of reading

Below are detailed descriptive narratives from the research observations (Table 2). They are described according to the participating school and teacher, and focused on five factors, namely: reading corner, reading books, display of learners' work on the classroom walls, classroom size, methods used in the teaching of reading, and teachers and learners' verbal interactions.

Table 2: Findings of classroom observations

Criteria	School A	School B
Reading corner	No reading corner	No reading corner
Reading books	Shortage of reading books	No reading books at all
Display of learners' work on the classroom walls.	Outdated	Excellent
Classroom size	Overcrowded	Overcrowded

Method used in the teaching of reading	Teacher 1 at school A was using the whole word method, sentence method and phonics method in her reading lessons. Teacher 2 at school A went further by focusing more on the language experience approach. Teacher 1 used it in building or forming sentences.	Teacher 2 at school B demonstrated a much better system of decoding, word identification and recognition, as well as vocabulary development. Teacher 1 at school B failed to implement the phonic method fully in her instruction. Instead, she used it only to correct pronunciation when learners were reading aloud, which meant oral spelling rather than letter sounds.
Teachers' and learners' verbal interactions	They used the pre-knowledge of learners to connect the present lesson to the experiences of the learners.	Learners were asked to re-tell the story read by their teacher.

4.4.3 Findings of classroom observations

Reading corner: It was disappointing to note that there were no reading corners. A classroom without a reading corner does not encourage learners to read on their own, and as a result, they do not acquire reading skills as expected. This does not promote the much-desired culture of reading.

Reading books: It was noticed that School A experienced an acute shortage of reading books, for example readers. Books were shared and rotated among the learners when reading, usually one reader per six learners. Learners were not allowed to take the books home and could therefore not practice reading after school hours. After reading periods, because learners were not allowed to borrow reading books to read at home, they were deprived of reading both at home and school. This has negative results, as learners lose interest in reading and fail to develop a reading habit. Ultimately, with less reading opportunity, not much learning takes place. At School B, there are no reading books at all. The teachers used the magazines, newspapers and old books to teach learners to read.

Display of learners' work on the classroom walls: In school A, it was observed that displays on classroom walls done by learners were outdated, fading, and falling off. Learners' work has a manifold satisfying effect on learners themselves, as well as teachers and parents. It fosters appreciation, ownership and creativity, as well as encouragement, among the learners. It also arouses the desire for incidental as well as perceptual reading. Depriving learners of the opportunity to display their achievements affects their emotional, social, psychological, moral as well as cognitive development, especially their self-esteem and reading sight. In school B, it was observed that displays on classroom walls done by learners were excellent - even the picture wall itself was excellent. The wall was divided into groups according to the subjects, so that the pictures for Mathematics were together, and those for Life Skills were together, and so on.

Number of learners per class: Overcrowded classes were discovered in both schools. Classroom 1 of School A had 54 learners, and classroom 2 of school B had 57 learners. With overcrowding, combined with reading book shortages, the development of reading becomes nearly impossible. Through experience, overcrowding in a class, such as classroom 1 of school A and 2 of school B, obviously results in poor reading achievement, disciplinary problems, and poor classroom control and management.

Individual learners' needs are also compromised, ultimately frustrating efforts to achieve effective teaching.

Method used in the teaching of reading: As per observations made, teachers of school A were using the whole word method, sentence method and phonics method in their English reading lessons. However, teacher 2 of school A went further by focusing more on the language experience approach. Teaching styles have a significant effect on developmental learning. The whole word method can empower children to identify and recognise regular and irregular words for reading and spelling strategies. Unfortunately, however, the intended goal seemed to be only partially realised in schools. Teaching appeared to concentrate only on word decoding and questions regarding the texts that were read. However, teacher 2 of school B demonstrated a much better system for decoding, word identification and recognition, as well as vocabulary development.

Although the schools tried utilising the sentence method, which aimed to build phrases and sentences, the teachers used it in oral reading and writing activities related to the texts that had been read. However, teacher 3 of school A used it further in building or forming sentences. Having used the phonic method, which aimed to help in the recognition of actual letters, sounds in letters and words, building of words, as well as the blending and introducing of syllables, teacher 4 of school B failed to implement the phonic method fully in her instruction. Instead, she used it only to correct pronunciation when learners were reading aloud, which meant oral spelling rather than letter sounds. With regard to the language experience approach, learners were required by teacher 6 of School A to construct sentences in reading activities using the familiar words related to the text read in the lesson. This was one of the expectations involved in using this approach. Had the approaches been completely executed, effective teaching of reading could then have taken place.

Teachers' and learners' verbal interactions: It was noted that in the classroom interactions employed by the three teachers (1 of school A, 2 of school B, and 2 of school A) in their commencement of reading lessons, there was no exploring of pre-knowledge by teacher 1 of school B, with the exception of school A.

All the three teachers used the free reading aloud, pronunciation and directed inquiries to teachers from learners. It was also observed that the practice of comparing and contrasting the relationships of phenomena by teachers took place, again with the exception of teacher 2 of school A. Teacher 2 of school B was seen to be utilising picture word matching, but not the other teachers. The researcher was impressed by the learners being asked to re-tell the story read by their teacher, which was not done by the other teachers. Only teacher 1 of school B used code-switching activities.

Teacher 1 of school A used the pre-knowledge of learners to connect the present lesson to the experiences of the learners. In this way, the teacher could determine what the learners already knew and did not know. As a result, the teacher could help develop strong and meaningful learning. When learners read aloud, the aim was for teachers to diagnose reading difficulties in word identification and word recognition among the learners. The two teachers of school A and teacher 1 of school B intervened in learners' reading by correcting only the pronunciation of words by some of their learners. Teacher 1 of school B did this much better. In the researcher's view, this could be done with the individual learners and at the same time with the whole class, in order to make learners pronounce every letter in the words. This could help learners to improve their reading and spelling, as well as to prevent them from making the same mistakes again. The oral matching of the pictures and words done by learners could demonstrate vocabulary development, comprehension and coordination between visual and mental cues, as a way of measuring reading awareness. The use of code switching by teacher 2 of school A enabled learners to resolve difficulties and facilitate their understanding of the learning expected of them.

4.4.4 Interviews with teachers

Table 3: Findings of the interviews

Questions	School A	School B
Do you experience problems when you teach reading to your Grade four class?	Do experience problems	No problems
What types of problems do you encounter when teaching reading?	The learners do not know how to read. Learners experience problems with letter sounds, letter names, consonants and vowels, and pronunciation.	Reading books are insufficient and even posters are not available.
What kind of support do you need to teach reading effectively?	No workshop attended.	Workshop attended was not sufficient. A well-planned workshop should have been presented at the beginning of the year to promote better results.
Do you use particular methods to teach reading?	Use the whole word approach, and sometimes do supplementary or compensatory teaching of reading	Use the language experience approach.
What are your preferred	Reading skills could be	The preferred method to

methods of teaching reading?	developed easily through look and say, repeat after me (drilling), pictures and cards, play letter cards and word card methods.	teach reading is through readers which contain stories, passages and poems.
What resources does the school have to support teachers in the teaching of reading skills?	They have readers, flash cards, reading corners set aside by teachers, a photocopier, and a library from which learners can borrow story books.	Reading books and readers are insufficient, but they sometimes buy reading aids from bookshops, such as readers, teachers' guides and posters.
Apart from the prescribed reader for your class, what other reading materials do you use in reading lessons?	Storybooks donated by parents.	Newspapers are used for unprepared reading.
Do you have anything to add?	Parents also somehow play a role in helping their children acquire reading skills through library books borrowed by learners.	Need reading books. Remedial teaching is done for learners with reading difficulties.

Question 1: Do you experience problems when you teach reading to your Grade four class?

Teacher 2 of school A said that problems were experienced in teaching reading, while teacher 1 of school B claimed that she did not experience any problems.

The individual interviews with the teachers from the two schools (A and B) revealed, however, that they all experienced problems in teaching reading in English to their classes. This had been admitted earlier both by the circuit inspector and by the principals of the two schools who were interviewed, which they blamed on the lack of reading books. They expressed their views possibly in an attempt to lay the blame for the schools' English reading problems on external factors.

Teacher 5 of school A added that teaching and learning materials are cardinal if effective learning is to take place. These materials guide the teachers on what to teach and the learners are able to learn from their materials. In addition, teaching pronunciation is a challenge for teachers. Most of the learners tend to pronounce English words according to the way in which they pronounce vernacular words. This takes a lot of effort on the teachers' part in trying to make the learners differentiate between the pronunciation of English and vernacular words.

Question 2: What types of problems do you encounter when teaching reading?

Teacher 1 of school A stated that the learners did not know how to read, while teacher 2 of school B said that her learners did not learn English on account of the influence of their mother tongue. Teacher 1 of school A declared that her children experienced problems with letter sounds, letter names, consonants and vowels, and pronunciation. The responses show that reading problems in English are mainly caused by learners' lack of reading ability, even in the vernacular. Learners experienced difficulties with phonics and the pronunciation of consonants and vowels. This fact was also confirmed by the results of the interviews with the circuit inspector and school principals. This strengthens the views that there are real factors affecting the teaching of reading skills in English as a second language.

Teacher 4 of school A stated that there were shortcomings in teachers' training, such as the use of English as a medium of instruction. This became a problem because teachers, after independence, had to use English in most of their class activities.

Pronunciation was another problem, but with the help of other teachers, the Head of Department and principal somehow succeeded in overcoming this problem. Teacher 6 of school B indicated that reading books were insufficient and even posters were not available. This teacher admitted that learners in grades one to three were taught in the vernacular, and only learned English as a subject. With many learners unable to read even in the vernacular, learning to read in English as a second language was even more difficult. In addition, teachers were trained in Afrikaans and not in English, which made pronunciation difficult for them.

The feeling that the shift in the medium of instruction from Afrikaans to English was abrupt because little or no training in the use of English as a classroom medium of instruction was given to teachers does not solve anything. Learners will always be on the losing end. Likewise, placing the blame for reading problems on the shortage of reading books will not help the learners at all. Reading books should indeed be available, but this shortage can be solved through initiatives. Finally, the lack of reading skills in the vernacular should not be used as an excuse for why reading in English becomes more difficult. Reading skills can be developed in many ways, depending on the teacher's patience, commitment, diligence and planning. In conclusion, the researcher believes that the shift from the mother tongue to English as the medium of instruction is only a simple transfer of learning, which teachers should not be afraid to tackle. Many miracles can take place in the classroom through innovation, creativity and flexibility, in order to benefit young learners.

Question 3: What kind of support do you need to teach reading effectively?

Teacher 2 of school A said that he had not attended any workshop and that he depended solely on the feedback given to him by a colleague who had participated in training on the improvement of reading skills. Teacher 2 of school B stated that she had indeed attended a workshop, not on reading skills development, but on the revision of the syllabus and teachers' guides. Teacher 1 of school A admitted that she had taken part in a workshop at the Teachers Resource Centre and had been given a handout on how to teach reading.

From time to time, these workshops are presented by the Ministry of Education to improve the teaching of reading skills. The teachers' responses, however, showed that they did take part in workshops, not on reading skills but for other purposes, such as syllabi revision. Attendance of workshops with no link to the teaching of reading skills provides no solution to problems in reading English. Besides this, the teachers' official absence from schools reduces the time that they are supposed to spend on their English lessons.

Teacher 1 of school A revealed that they were given in-service training by advisory teachers at the Teachers' Resource Centre. He also added that the cluster center organised a get-together of English teachers every term, in order for them to help one another with their various problems. Teacher 2 of school B stated that two teachers attended various workshops at the Teachers' Resource Centre on the use of teachers' guides, the syllabus, methods of teaching reading and the use of learners' books. Teacher 2 of school A claimed that teachers in the lower primary phase at his school received school-level training, not merely on reading in English, but on English as a whole, in order to develop all the necessary language skills.

Reference was made to the teachers' workshop and training in English. It was noted, however, that not all teachers were required to attend upgrading courses on the same level. Workshops at the regional level give teachers a greater opportunity to learn modern approaches and use the latest trends in the teaching of reading skills. Compulsory attendance of English teachers at regional workshops could be the answer to the national literacy needs of every young learner. If this is not done, both teachers and learners will be left behind – with teachers continuing with the old and ineffective methods of developing English reading skills, and with learners being the ultimate losers.

Question 4: Do you use particular methods to teach reading?

Teacher 1 of school A indicated that he used the whole word approach. He added that he sometimes did supplementary or compensatory teaching on reading.

Teachers 1 and 2 of school B claimed that they used the language experience approach. The interviews revealed that in both the schools, there is no inadequate method, as the methods complement one another, but it seemed that teachers were confused regarding the difference between teaching approaches and reading activities, as shown by the interviews and observations. It is obvious that to develop English reading skills, a variety of appropriate techniques should be used. This is what Ankama (2008) notes, stressing that the quality of language teaching will improve if teachers use all the available approaches. Given that most of the approaches used by the three teachers were inadequate and inappropriate, improving English reading skills will remain a significant problem.

Question 5: What are your preferred methods of teaching reading?

Teacher 2 of school B stated that the preferred method to teach reading is the use of readers, which contain stories, passages and poems. Sight words, phonics exercises and picture words could be found in the readers which could be used by the teachers to develop and enhance reading skills. Teacher 4 of school B declared that the common word method was the most effective, as the learners had the opportunity to practice letters one by one. He also mentioned the phonic method, in which young children became used to the sound of letters and learned letter names. Teacher 3 of school A said that reading skills could be developed easily through look and say, repeat after me (drilling), pictures and cards, play letter cards and word card methods.

The researcher observed that all four teachers used the same teaching approaches, as prescribed by their principals. Therefore, if they all used similar approaches, there is no reason why reading difficulties should exist. The problem may lie, however, in how to make the teaching of English reading skills a success. Another problem was caused by the shortages of reading books, as stated above. However, in order to develop reading skills, the commitment of teachers is essential. Teaching, in order to be more effective and children-friendly, especially in the face of shortages of reading books, requires resourcefulness, creativity and patience. Magical and instant results will not take place if teachers simply watch the daily classroom scenario helplessly.

What is needed most is more effective planning and more productive activities, by applying various proven approaches. According to Ankama (2008), there is no single most effective method of teaching English. By trying various methods, one may discover something that is best for one's learners and their context.

Question 6: What resources does the school have in order to support teachers in teaching reading skills?

Teacher 1 of school A stated that they had readers, flash cards, reading corners set aside by teachers, a photocopier, and a library from which learners could borrow story books. Teacher 2 of school B admitted that reading books and readers were insufficient, but that they sometimes bought reading aids from bookshops, such as readers, teachers' guides and posters. Teacher 1 of school B said that the school did not have specific resources, but had flipcharts for teachers to write down useful words for learners. He added that the school also bought picture charts.

The school resources that support teachers' efforts to develop English reading skills were noted. Teacher 4 of school A claimed that they were buying school reading materials from shops, but that they were not buying them in large quantities, which actually meant that more materials were needed. This also meant that schools, particularly the two schools in this study, do not get enough material support from the Ministry of Education. Teacher 2 of school B added that if the Ministry neglects its role of providing reading materials to schools, or if it fails to distribute teaching and learning aids equally and fairly, especially those that facilitate the teaching of reading as a second language, then the standard of learners' reading skills will definitely be affected. According to teacher 6 of school A, unequal and unbalanced distribution of reading materials can really affect the reading potentiality of learners. It can also affect the efficiency of teachers as far as teaching English reading is concerned.

Question 7: Apart from the prescribed reader for your class, what other reading materials do you use in your reading lessons?

Teacher 1 of school A stated that he used readers for reading aloud. He said that he alternated the readers with storybooks donated by parents. Teacher 2 of school B said that he usually used story books which learners choose, in order for them to read aloud and answer questions about. Teacher 1 of school B indicated that she used newspapers for unprepared reading, as well as other English books. It was noted that the teachers used storybooks and newspapers as additional reading materials. This is commendable, as the learners are exposed to different types of reading materials from which to choose items to read. This can develop the learners' reading culture and habits.

Question 8: Do you have anything to add?

Teacher 1 of school A and teachers 1 and 2 of school B stated that since reading books are insufficient, the government and parents should provide readers. Teacher 2 of school A added that parents should be encouraged to attend meetings in order to be informed of their children's progress, as well as their problems. And lastly, teacher 2 of school B recommended that remedial teaching be done for learners with reading difficulties. The three teachers were unanimous about the urgent need for reading books in their schools, in order to solve reading problems. However, parents are also expected to do their part in improving reading skills through advice given to the children while reading with them at home, because the school and its teachers cannot do it alone. Remedial teaching as part and parcel of successful teaching should also be seriously considered as one of the solutions to the problem of reading skills development. All the four teachers from schools A and B honestly admitted that they had insufficient English reading books in their schools, which was causing problems when it came to reading in English. This is a clear indication that schools have to solve this problem in order to improve English reading skills.

Teacher 2 of school A declared that parents also somehow played a role in helping their children acquire reading skills through library books borrowed by learners to take home. He admitted, however, that the government, through the Ministry of Education, did not provide enough reading books due to the lower budget for the primary level. This should not be the case, as learners at lower primary level need to be better catered for, in order to ensure a strong foundation for them. Teacher 3 of school B stated that more reading materials were needed, but the government subsidy for readers, games, flashcards, teachers' guide and learners' activity books was insufficient.

Teacher 2 of school B affirmed that the Ministry of Education needed to train teachers on methods of teaching in English as a medium of instruction, as most of the teachers lacked this knowledge. Teacher 1 of school A concluded that this was the main cause of the high failure rate, on account of learners' lack of basic reading skills. From the teachers' interviews, it is clear that the following four factors affect the development of English reading skills in Grade 3: lack of reading books, inadequate training workshops on English reading skill development for teachers, a lower budget allocation for primary schools, and lack of parental involvement.

In-service training, workshops, seminars and conferences for teachers are bridges to educational growth. Through them, the past, present and future are joined together. They strengthen teachers' knowledge and broaden their horizons. They should therefore be a "must" for teachers, not only for personal growth but also for professional development. Without the opportunity afforded by this training, the teaching of English reading skills will be at a standstill or on the decline. As learners spend more time at home than at school, they can be guided more by their parents in order to strengthen their reading skills. Parents should be actively involved in developing these skills through guided reading at home after school. Their assistance is valuable as a supplement to the knowledge gained at school.

The more money that is allocated to readers' procurement and various reading aids, the more interest and motivation will be generated in learners to read books that are accessible to them.

Thus, an adequate budget allocation can spur the development of reading interest and the natural curiosity of children. The three principals listed several reasons for the poor development of English reading skills in schools, namely: shortages of reading books, lack of training for teachers on English reading skills development, use of the mother tongue as medium of instruction in Grades 1 to 4, inadequate budget allocation to lower primary education, and the sudden shift from Afrikaans to English. All these factors aggravate the problem of English reading skills development.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the findings of the study were discussed with reference to the literature review. This chapter presents the conclusion, research design, recommendations, limitations of the study, and closing remarks.

5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

To answer the specific research question, the research used a qualitative design, in order to allow for individual interviews with purposively selected participants. These interviews were then transcribed, coded and interpreted. As knowledge is socially constructed, the teachers' role of constructing a more meaningful reality for improving the reading ability of Grade Four learners, by providing support, was examined. The research approach was aimed to seek clarification and insight. The interviews perceived the participants' perspectives and contributions as important. Predetermined questions were devised so that each of the participating teachers responded to a similar set of questions, but the interview process was still allowed to be flexible. Data were thus collected, transcribed and analysed. Throughout all stages of the planning and data collection, the ethical guidelines of confidentiality, anonymity and respect for educational research were adhered to.

5.3 CONCLUSION

Reading is indispensable to primary school pupils. With the appropriate reading materials, a conducive environment, and teachers with adequate educational qualifications, good reading skills will help produce pupils who perform well in other subjects. Government, teachers and parents have important roles to play in the education of pupils in primary schools, especially in English as a school subject. Eighty-eight percent of respondents felt that teachers play the most important role. Government is the major provider of education through funding, rules and regulations. The attitudes of parents help motivate children.

The purpose of the study was firstly to determine the experiences of grade four teachers and to identify factors that cause reading difficulties among grade four pupils. Secondly, the study was designed to identify the challenges that teachers encounter in teaching reading to grade four learners.

The findings of this study indicate that grade four learners have reading difficulties. These include omitting, substituting and adding words, as well as mispronouncing words. This is a significant challenge for the teachers who teach these learners. This can be frustrating for both the learners and teachers, especially when the teacher does not understand the causes of reading difficulties, how to assess those learners with reading difficulties, as well as how to help them. According to the findings of this study, teachers have their own perceptions about the causes of reading difficulties, and their own way of assessing learners with reading difficulties.

The home environment can also negatively affect the reading ability of learners. There are many factors that can contribute to this, such as poverty, illiteracy of parents or guardians, etc. However, the factors which were explored in this study (nature of lighting system at home and availability of a reading table at home) did not affect the reading ability of learners. This is not to say that the home environment has no effect on one's reading ability, but the home environment itself consists of many factors.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been made and may be utilised by relevant institutions such as the Ministry of Education, in an effort to alleviate reading difficulties among primary school learners in general and grade four learners in particular:

- Teachers must acknowledge the importance of reading skills and plan an effective programme of reading instruction, with a focus on promoting a reading culture among pupils in their schools.

- School authorities should introduce informal education on readiness for reading. Non-structured reading instruction should be introduced, and the child's ability to respond to the reading materials should be observed.
- Parents should provide a stimulating reading environment for their children and wards. They should encourage their children to read at home. Books should be provided for them to improve their reading. They should also encourage their children to watch educational television. This will go a long way towards improving their phonetic and vocabulary development. They should cultivate the habit of using their leisure time to read for pleasure.
- The teacher- learner ratio must be reduced so as to enable individual attention, especially when it comes to assisting pupils with reading difficulties. In this regard, government needs to employ more teachers and build more schools.

Government, at the state and local level, should provide appropriate materials for teaching reading skills. Libraries should be provided for our primary schools, since the absence of libraries is a factor contributing to the deficiency in reading skills. There is a need to resuscitate the mobile library in schools and make it compulsory for all pupils to register for a token fee, in order to get access to the services provided by this mobile library.

5.5 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study was limited by the sample size of six grade four teachers (three from each school), as it focused on two schools in the Vhembe district. This small group cannot in any way represent the total diverse population of Grade four teachers in a South African context. However, the results obtained from this study provide an opportunity for future research. The reliability and validity of the findings can be enhanced by including more Grade four teachers.

5.6 CLOSING REMARKS

The time that was spent conducting this research over the past three years has been most enjoyable for both the researcher and the teachers. The teachers looked forward to teaching learners phonics and participated with enthusiasm. The researcher learnt a lot about the various phonics programmes and how these programmes can be used in conjunction with one another. The researcher also learned about the overall functioning of Grade four teachers and what aspects need to be addressed in order for the learners to reach their full learning potential.

South African learners are required to prosper in a country that is rich in diversity and multilingualism. It is the responsibility of both teachers and parents to utilise the valuable information that was obtained in this study.

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APPENDIX A

UNISA | 
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1434

VUKEYA I S MS
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ELIM HOSPITAL
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STUDENT NUMBER : 3488-514-5

ENQUIRIES TEL : 0861670411

FAX : (012)429-4150

eMAIL : mandd@unisa.ac.za

2014-03-12

Dear Student

I hereby confirm that you have been registered for the current academic year as follows:

Proposed Qualification: MED (EDUC MANAGEMENT) (98405)

CODE	PAPER	S NAME OF STUDY UNIT	WEIGHT	LANG.	PROVISIONAL EXAMINATION EXAM.DATE	EXAMINATION CENTRE (PLACE)
Study units registered without formal exams:						
@ DFEDU95		M ED - EDUCATION MANAGEMENT	0.381	E		
DFEDU95		M ED - EDUCATION MANAGEMENT	0.381	E		

@ Exam transferred from previous academic year

You are referred to the "MyRegistration" brochure regarding fees that are forfeited on cancellation of any study units.

To avoid cancellation of your registration or examination entry and forfeiting your minimum initial payment, you must submit the following to the Registrar (Academic) by return of mail:

214 A CERTIFIED copy of your identity document, passport or birth certificate reflecting your full names and date of birth. The copy must be certified by a Commissioner of Oaths and bear the Commissioner's stamp. A foreign student may have the document certified by a SA Embassy, Consulate, High Commission, Trade Mission or Public Notary. Please note that fax/scanned copies or copies of certified copies are not acceptable.

APPENDIX B

Consent letter for grade four teachers.

Dear Participant

I, Ivy Saleleni Vukeya, student no. 34885145, am registered for the Master of Education Degree at the University Of South Africa. My research topic is “EXPERIENCES OF GRADE FOUR TEACHERS WITH REGARD TO READING COMPETENCE IN TWO SCHOOLS”. I wish to conduct this study in your school. The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of reading problems.

Therefore, I am requesting you to participate in the study. I have used purposive sampling to select the participating schools, because they have experience in teaching reading to grade four learners. The data will be collected using interviews and classroom observation. The researcher will interview six teachers from each school. The duration of the interviews will be one hour, and the research will be conducted over a period of three months.

The respondents will be asked questions before or after participating in the interview. The respondents` confidentiality and anonymity will be respected. The interview session is voluntarily, and participants have a right to withdraw from the study at any time if they so wish. There are no known risks associated with the study. The names of the participants will be listed when conducting an interview, but they will not be quoted in the final report. The participants` responses will be audio taped.

For more information, please contact my supervisor Professor E.R. Mathipa at: 0822022118 or email: matier@unisa.ac.za .

If you need further information, please contact me at:

Cell no. 0726792000 or email: vukeyais@gmail.com

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent letter overleaf.

Yours faithfully

I.S. Vukeya

APPENDIX C: Consent form

I.....agree to participate in the research study entitled " EXPERIENCES OF GRADE FOUR TEACHERS WITH REGARD TO READING COMPETENCE" being conducted by Ivy Saleleni Vukeya.

The purpose of the study was explained to me in writing and I am voluntarily participating.

I understand that my confidentiality and anonymity will be respected and that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without any penalties. I understand that the interview will be audio taped. I understand that my name may not be quoted in the final report.

Participant signature: _____ Date: _____

Research signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR GRADE FOUR TEACHERS

Enq: I.S. Vukeya
Cell no. 0726792000

P.O. Box 1286
Elim Hospital
0960
03 February 2014

Dear Grade four teachers

I, Ivy Saleleni Vukeya, a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA), am currently studying towards a Master Degree in Educational Management. My research topic is: EXPERIENCES OF GRADE FOUR TEACHERS WITH REGARD TO READING COMPETENCE IN TWO SCHOOLS.

I am kindly requesting you to participate in this study. The duration of the interview will be one hour. Your involvement in this study is voluntary, and you are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time.

You are assured that the information gathered will be treated anonymously and confidentially. The names of the participants will be listed when conducting an interview, but will not be quoted in the final report. The participants' responses will be audio taped.

The research findings will be made available to you on request.

For more information, please contact my supervisor Professor E.R. Mathipa at: 0822022118 or email: matier@unisa.ac.za.

Thank you for your willingness to assist me in this research.

Regards

I.S. Vukeya
Student no. 34885145
Email: vukeyais@gmail.com

Participants

1. Do you experience problems when teaching reading to your Grade four class?
2. What types of problems do you encounter when teaching reading?
3. What kind of support do you need in order to teach reading effectively?
4. Do you use particular methods to teach reading?
5. What are your preferred methods of teaching reading?
6. What resources does the school have in order to support teachers in teaching reading skills?
7. Apart from the prescribed reader for your class, what other reading materials do you use in your reading lessons?
8. Do you have anything to add? If yes, please give details.

OBSERVATION TECHNIQUES

The researcher has the following objectives:

- To look at the learning classroom environment to see whether or not there are reading corners.
- To check whether the available materials are displayed, including learners' work, on classroom walls, and to see whether or not they are sufficient as learning aids for the above-stated Grade four learners of the two selected schools.
- To determine whether or not the learning materials are appropriate for the targeted Grade four level.
- To see how the teachers are managing the number of learners in the classroom. This is in order to determine whether or not the teacher-learner ratio is used correctly in the classroom, as officially prescribed by the Ministry of Education.
- To monitor how the techniques and approaches are used by teachers in developing teaching reading skills of learners in three different classrooms representing Grade four.
- To observe teachers' and learners' interactions during reading lessons.

APPENDIX E

Ref. 82159696
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Cell no. : 0726792000

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Elim Hospital
0960
03 February 2014

The District Senior Manager
Vhembe District
Department of Education
Private Bag X 2250
Sibasa
0970

Dear Sir

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO COLLECT DATA AT HLANGANANI SOUTH CIRCUIT SCHOOLS

I, Ivy Saleleni Vukeya, a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA), am currently studying towards a Master Degree in Educational Management. I am engaged in a research study, in which I am investigating the experiences of grade four teachers with regard to reading ability among grade four learners. My research topic is:
EXPERIENCES OF GRADE FOUR TEACHERS WITH REGARD TO READING
COMPETENCE IN TWO SCHOOLS.

I therefore wish to ask permission to collect data at Hlanganani South Circuit Schools. The purpose of my study is to investigate the experiences of grade four teachers regarding the reading competence of the learners. The participants will be purposively selected. The respondents will be asked questions during the interviews. The participants' consent will be sought regarding the use of a tape-recorder.

I have selected the following schools: Nkanyani Primary School and Vungela Primary School. Participating in this study is voluntary and participants have a right to withdraw from the study at any time if they so wish. The respondents' confidentiality and anonymity will be respected. The research will be conducted over a period of three months, and the findings will be made available to you on request.

I hope my request will be favourably considered.

Yours faithfully
Vukeya I.S

Signature:  _____

Ref. 82159696
Eng.: Vukeya I.S
Cell no. : 0726792000

P.O. Box 1286
Elim Hospital
0960
03 February 2014

The Principal
Nkanyani Primary School
P.O Box 88
Vongani
0930

Dear Sir

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO COLLECT DATA AT NKANYANI PRIMARY SCHOOL

I, Ivy Saleleni Vukeya, a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA), am currently studying towards a Master Degree in Educational Management. I am engaged in a research study, in which I am investigating the experiences of grade four teachers with

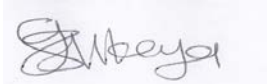
regard to reading ability among grade four learners. My research topic is:
EXPERIENCES OF GRADE FOUR TEACHERS WITH REGARD TO READING
COMPETENCE IN TWO SCHOOLS.

I therefore wish to ask permission to collect data at your school (Nkanyani Primary School). The purpose of my study is to determine the experiences of grade four teachers regarding the reading competence of learners. The participants will be purposively selected. The respondents will be asked questions during the interviews. The participants' consent will be sought for the use of a tape-recorder.

While I am conducting the research, I will interview six educators. To participate in this study is voluntary and participants have a right to withdraw from the study at any time, if they so wish. The respondents' confidentiality and anonymity will be respected. The research will be made available to you on request.

I hope my request will be favourably considered.

Yours faithfully
I.S. Vukeya

Signature:  _____



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
VHEMBE DISTRICT

Ref: 12/2/4/5

Enq: Manenzhe T.A

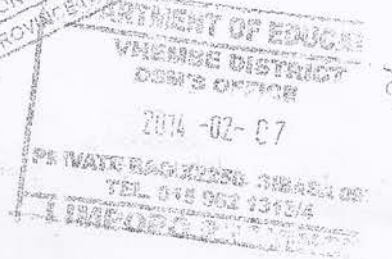
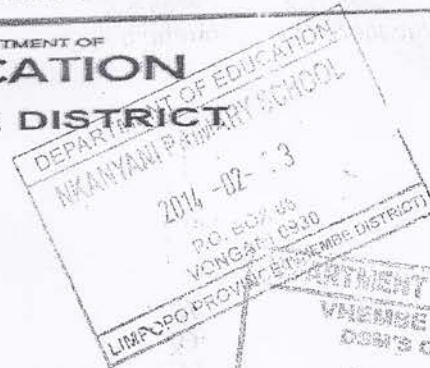
TEL: 082 868 3499

VUKEYA IVY SALELELI (34885145)

P O BOX 1286

ELIM HOSPITAL

0960



REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA AT NKANYANI PRIMARY AND VUNGELA PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITHIN HLANGANANI SOUTH CIRCUIT

1. The District office has no objection in granting you permission to collect data at Primary schools as you have requested.
2. You are however advised to conduct your data collection with the consent of both the Circuit Manager and the Principals of the schools identified.
3. The process of data collection should not interrupt the normal time for learning and teaching.
4. Do your data collection after school.
5. Wishing you all the best.

DISTRICT SENIOR MANAGER

2014-02-07

DATE

NKANYANI PRIMARY SCHOOL



Situated in Limpopo Province, Vhembe District, Mlanganani South Circuit

Enq. Valoyi R.S
Cell no. 072 133 7252

P.O. Box 88
Vongani
0930
03 March 2014

To whom it my concern

This is to confirm that Vukeya Ivy Saleleni Student no. 34885145 was granted permission to conduct her Research Project at this school, as she proved to us that she is a registered student of UNISA.

We thank you.

Yours Faithfully
Valoyi R.S [principal]


Signature

