INVESTIGATING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE READING LEVELS OF LEARNERS IN AN

EASTERN CAPE COMMUNITY

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Julia Nomahlubi Poswa-Nolisi, hereby declare that the dissertation *Investigating Strategies to Improve Reading Levels of Learners in an Eastern Cape Community*, submitted to the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University for the degree of Master of Education, is my own work, that it has not previously been submitted at any other University or for another qualification.

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ABSTRACT

Literacy does not develop in a vacuum. Reading is taught and learnt within a social context. The school and teachers are a central part of this context, Pretorius and Machet (2003). The purpose of this study was to investigate the strategies to improve reading in an Eastern Cape community. To realise this aim, I first looked for strategies that are currently used by teachers. Then I focussed on additional strategies that could be of use in improving reading levels.

This study observed the practices and accessed perceptions of teachers in two primary schools regarding literacy accomplishments in order to come up with relevant strategies to improve reading levels. My study is a qualitative case study focussed on Foundation and Intermediate Phase literacy. The two schools used in this study have different language policies. The one uses English as the language of learning and teaching and the other school uses isiXhosa. The home language of most of the learners in both schools is isiXhosa. I observed and interviewed teachers to get deeper understanding of the problem in the two schools.

The Four Resources Model of Freebody and Luke (1990) proved to be a strategy that could be used to support the development of reading from the early years and on into the high school years. This model was found to articulate well with the official school literacy curriculum. In-school reading strategies could be well supplemented by assisting learners to engage with the four roles of Code Breaker, Text Participant, Text User and Text Analyst.

 In my investigation I found out that there is a problem in our schools in both home and additional language contexts. There is a great need for both in-school and out-of-school strategies to improve the situation. An Asset Mapping strategy revealed the range of existing and potential strategies available to a particular Eastern Cape community to raise reading levels and thereby improve learning.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANA   - Annual National Assessment

ABCD   - Asset-Based Community Development

BICS   - Basic International Communication Skills

CALP   - Communicative Academic Language Proficiency

CAPS   - Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement

DoE   - Department of Education

ESL   - English Second Language

HSRC   - Human Science Research Council

IRA   - International Reading Assessment

LOLT   - Language of Learning and Teaching

MP   - Member of Parliament

NAEYC   - National Assessment for the Education of Young Children

NCS   - National Curriculum Statement

NMF   - Nelson Mandela Foundation

NMMU   - Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

OBE   - Outcomes Based Education

PANSALB   - Pan South African Language Board

PEI   - President's Education Initiative

PIRLS   - Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

RASA   - Reading Association of South Africa

SAQMEC   - South African consortium for Monitoring Education Quality

SMT   - School Management Team

UNESCO   - United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

WCED   - Western Cape Education Department

CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Reading is the first and the most important skill that a child must learn and acquire from the beginning of her school career. Lewis and Ellis (2006:9) indicated, "Reading offers opportunities for enjoyment, for increasing our knowledge of the world and for enhancing our imagination and creativity". Reading is an essential competence to gain knowledge and open the ground for further thinking.

Learning to read involves not only the cognitive powers of the child's mind but also imagination and emotions, it builds on cognitive, linguistic and social skills that have developed from the earliest age (Rayner and Perfetti, 2001). Sousa (2005:32) asserted that "Speaking is a normal, genetically-hardwired capability: reading is not". That means, speaking happens naturally and is being supported by the family and community. But reading is a competence that is learnt and strengthened by everyday social interaction with people and text. No areas of brain are specialised for reading. Therefore it is a relatively new phenomenon in the development of humans and requires particular attention and dedicated intervention and focus.

According to the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document, DoE (2011), proficient reading is stimulated through exposure to environmental print. In a print rich environment learners are able to develop an interest in different forms of print. Their interest and confidence in reading is boosted. A positive orientation to reading often leads to an improvement in performance. Ultimately this could bring forth independent, lifelong readers. In support of this statement CAPS (2011:20) stated "Reading provides a way of giving children practice and encouraging reading for enjoyment. Reading provides an opportunity for children to read books on their own". Therefore, if a learner cannot read she cannot easily enjoy and give meaning to the text she is reading because she does not understand it.

1.2 CLARIFICATION OF OWN POSITION AND THE ORIGIN OF MY CONCERN

I am teaching in a high school. We draw learners from both advantaged and disadvantaged areas of Lace[1], a small town in the Eastern Cape Province. Some learners come from well-resourced areas and others from those areas which are poverty stricken. I am teaching learners from Grade 8 to Grade 12 with a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Most of the learners have isiXhosa as a Home Language and they live in communities where isiXhosa is the predominant language. These learners are expected to learn all their subjects in English, which is the medium of instruction, whereas their only exposure to English is usually at school. Our language policy promotes the use of English in school but, the dominant language of conversation in the staffroom and playground is isiXhosa. There are some foreign learners in the school. Usually they speak their own language or English rather than isiXhosa. This complex multilingual context presents certain challenges for teachers and learners.

Previously, my school was known as 'The Best Science School' in the district with top academic results. We achieved Matric pass rates which were between 90 and 98 % for more than ten years. But things changed. From 2009 to 2011, my school was one of the underachieving schools. In 2012 we had a Grade 12 pass rate of 63 % and 64% in 2013. This increase was through interventions made by teachers, the Department of Education (DoE) and parents.

An example of a successful intervention was an intensive school based intervention. The DoE introduced the Ilima project to schools where learners camped in schools and teachers took turns in helping them in different subjects. Parents were also playing a role in staying overnight night and see to support and care for learners. The learners had study times up to half past ten at night. Teachers were monitoring the whole process. The school also hired good teachers from other schools to help learners. A series of test was also another strategy to encourage learners to engage closely with their books. Finishing the syllabus in August helped a great deal because it gave learners enough chance for revision. Learners seemed to appreciate the hard work by all participants to support and help them.

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[1] The name of the town was changed to protect the identity of research participants.

Despite the efforts of teachers and others, many learners seem to lack commitment and determination. This appears to be due to various social problems they are experiencing, for example, limited resources in their communities and at school. Our learners are often more interested in out of school activities than their studies and are involving themselves in risky behaviours. Many practise unhealthy lifestyle choices like using drugs and early sexual experimentation. As a result, many become pregnant whilst they are still at school. These behaviours impact negatively on their school work. Some learners drop out early because they feel that they are old enough to leave school. This contributes to the incidence of inadequate literacy levels in our local communities.

Many of the learners in our schools are living with their grandparents, as their biological parents are still too young to be parents and are unable to cope effectively with the demands of parenting. Communities with low literacy levels may not have sufficient well educated parents to assist learners with their school work. This situation impacts on the performance of the learners. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011 report indicated that, "A supportive home environment and early start are crucial in shaping children's literacy" (PIRLS, 2011:109). Without sufficient support at home and in the community, the end result is high failure rate and poverty, which makes things worse in most families as they struggle to cope with the demands of life.

Reading, or more broadly, literacy is a continuous process of learning which enables an individual to achieve her goals and participate more fully in the wider society. If a learner struggles to read, doors may be closed for personal growth and career opportunities. Therefore, it is an essential tool for acquiring and maintaining employment skills. Reading also enables a more fulfilled life and greater opportunities. It is thus the duty of every society to see to it that education is taking its course in improving the lives of children and the society itself. "Literacy does not simply provide educational and economic benefits, but also gives people the tools to access a range of other socio-economic and political rights", Luyt (2011:11). Luyt suggested that, until we get to grips with the issue of improving education, we will remain trapped in a cycle of unemployment, lack of entrepreneurship and dependency on state grants, (ibid). The Department of Education is trying to address

the challenges of the education system, but there seems to be little or no significant improvement. Although the curriculum is changing now and again, the situation appears to remain challenging in terms of the education and literacy opportunities of the majority of learners. If children continue to live in abject poverty, this will hinder whatever improvements made in the education system. They will be forced to bring their health, family and community difficulties with them into the classroom. By so doing, effective teaching and learning will not take place. There will always be gaps in their learning. The challenge seems to be to interrupt both the cycles of poverty and poor teaching and learning.

Currently the Department of Education is busy trying to implement the new curriculum, (Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement), spending millions of rand trying to improve the education system, but as long as social problems are not addressed effectively there is likely to be limited progress in schooling.

1.3 READING AS A SET OF SKILLS LEARNT IN A RANGE OF CONTEXTS

One of the debates in literature on reading is whether reading is a skill or a social practice. Freebody (1992:28), argued that "If by skill, we mean cognition, then there can be little doubt that reading requires cognitive skills, such as recognition, (of letters and sounds), blending (combining sounds together to form words), association (of letters and sounds), and understanding (making sense of the marks on the page and how they make meaning)". These are cognitive processes that take place in different parts of the brain. The position in this dissertation is that reading is more than a set of technical skills. Reading includes a set or range of cognitive skills. These cognitive skills are not acquired in isolation. They are acquired within particular contexts. The social contexts of home, school and community impact significantly on the extent to which learners gain and use cognitive skills. However, as a starting point various skills and competencies must be in place (Freebody, 1992).

The size of learners' vocabulary plays a crucial role both in reading and academic success, whether they are studying through the medium of their first language (L1) or not (Stanovich, (1986), Coady, (1993), Joshi, (2005) in Scheepers (2008). Vocabulary development is closely

tied to literacy development. In order to increase learners' vocabulary to a level which will allow them to read their high school textbooks with relative ease, a range of oral and written language activities must be provided from the early years and continuing through into the entire primary school stage. Parallel to vocabulary work, a range of skills must be introduced and explicitly taught (DoE 2008a and 2008b).

Learners must develop sound literacy skills from the very onset of schooling. This does not seem to be happening in South Africa. "Under ideal circumstances, children will acquire about ten new words a day in their mother tongue from two years of age onwards – by the time they are six, they should command a vocabulary of about 14 000 words" (Joshi, 2005: 212). Nation in Joshi, (2005), suggested a figure of about 1000 words per year until a learner is 20. However, research has shown that despite this large oral vocabulary, the average grade 4 learner can only recognise about 3 000 words in print (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998).

Furthermore, the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SAQMEC) (Murimba, 2005) revealed that children in grades 1 to 6 were reading two grade levels below in English and in their first language. This indicates that it is a widespread problem, and is not limited to South Africa. Studies mentioned by Joshi (2005:213) also indicated that even though children "made gains in reading in early grades [in their first language], poor vocabulary impeded their reading". As early as grade two, children with poor vocabularies had difficulties in catching up with average readers (Joshi, 2005). As the level of schooling progresses, so the levels of abstraction in learning materials increase and supportive context is reduced.

Processing and producing language becomes more cognitively demanding, necessitating the development of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) if learners are to succeed at school. A lack of basic vocabulary hinders learners in that they are forced to spend too much time decoding text, and not enough time interpreting what they read, (Joshi, 2005; Nation, 2006). The acquisition of CALP (Cummins, 1991; Pretorius, 2002; Smyth, 2002) may be inhibited in second language learners for various reasons and that may have serious negative effects on the education of the majority of children who are from socio-economically disadvantaged communities. If learners are not reading adequately in the

foundation phase and do not have the reading and general literacy skills in their first language to transfer to their second language, they will struggle to read in their second language. Prinsloo in Janks (2011:35) stated that the results on the PIRLS test in 2006 made it clear that "South African educators need to examine the way in which they teach literacy in the foundation phase in different languages to close this gap between middle class and previously advantaged communities". Bilingual children must achieve a threshold of linguistic competence in their first language if they are to transfer these skills successfully to their second language (Cummins: 1991). The low literacy levels mentioned above led us to the understanding that the vocabulary acquisition, and development in English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) depends on the exposure of the learner to different approaches to language learning.

Literacy levels indicate that black learners are performing below standard as compared to white learners due to social conditions, limited teacher training and absence of literature in their homes. Poor parental support is also mentioned as contributing to the problem. Looking at this issue, Prinsloo (2008), suggested that the community, including parents and caregivers, has to become able and powerful in fostering a love for reading and a reading culture among learners to ensure future opportunities for them. This should happen despite extreme challenges, limited resources and opportunity, abject poverty and low literacy levels, especially in remote rural areas.

 Klause (2008), Prinsloo (2008), Joshi (2005), Nation (2006), suggest that when children learn to read they are trying to make sense of written signs and words. When they do, they use a variety of general skills such as motor function and perception, and apply them to the writing. Children should develop most of the general preparatory skills before they come to school. If children struggle with any of these general skills, they will usually struggle with reading. Hence Klaus (2008:322) stated that, "Reading starts from the early ages and continues to higher levels". Parental support and home studies will play a very important role in this regard. Learners are often passive readers both at school and out of school. However, the four roles of Freebody (1992) and Freebody and Luke (1990) promote adult interaction with the child so that she can engage actively in reading. According to Freebody

(1992) parent involvement is not just for the provision of physical needs but also to model an appropriate way of interaction with text. Active engagement eventually enables learners to move from passivity to a critical approach to reading (Comber, 2002; Freebody and Luke, 1990 and Vasquez, 2004).

Karlin (1994:352) argued that "Many learners, who cannot pronounce many of the words in the material given, fail to understand much of what they are trying to read. They are also weak in comprehension and this combination is too difficult to overcome". Learners become very frustrated when they have to acquire information through reading. They read long, understand little and remember less. Learners thus find content or subject matter difficult to read. They struggle to move beyond basic reading competency to reading critically and with insight.

1.3.1 BACKGROUND REGARDING READING LEVELS

Most of our learners are unable to read or write at appropriate levels. Pretorius and Machet (2003) maintain that reading in South African schools is in crisis, because learners' reading skills are poorly developed from primary school through to tertiary level. This results in low literacy skills in both the African languages, used in the early stage of primary school, as well as English. Inadequate reading competence in both the Home Language and the Additional Language is acknowledged as a contributing factor of the prevailing high failure rate in South Africa. Studies show that, "South Africa's learners are falling behind internationally and failing to master basic literacy skills" (Prinsloo, 2008: 20).

Provincial and National findings signal that literacy is already a problem in the Foundation Phase. If we look at the 2010 Annual National Assessment (ANA) results of learner literacy ability undertaken in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, only 12% of Grade 6 pupils scored 50% and among Grade 3 pupils only 17% scored more than 50% in their literacy assessments. The 2011 audit undertaken by the South African National Department of Education to assess literacy levels across all nine provinces showed that only 38% of Grade 3 learners could read at grade level in their first language.

The 2012 analysis of ANA results indicated some improvement in literacy competencies. Unfortunately South Africa is still falling behind, in terms of literacy results, compared to other countries. In Grade 3, the average in literacy stands at 52%, showing an improvement of 17% from 2011. In Grade 6 the National average performance in language is 43% in (Home Language) and 36% in First Additional Language (FAL) compared to 28% in 2011. Minister, of the Department of Education, Moetshega referred the 2012 ANA results with cautious optimism indicating, "It is important to note that while there has been some improvement in the achievement of learning outcomes in most grades in 2012, we still have a long way to go towards realising the desired 60% threshold of learners mastering the minimum Language and Mathematics competencies by the end of Grade 3, 6 and 9".

Comparing the above results with the 2013 analysis, we find there is still a slight improvement, but the 60% target was not yet reached. For instance, in Home Language (HL), Grade 3 achieved 51% in 2013. There is no improvement at all. Performance is 1% less with a 52% achievement level in 2012. Considering the Eastern Cape results, there is still a lot to be done because they are far away from the target. In 2012 Grade 6 learners achieved poorly (38.4%) in HL but there was a slight improvement in 2013 with a percentage of 44.8 in 2013 and 43.2 in First Additional Language (FAL). Grade 9 results were also disappointing. In HL, the Province got 42.6% in 2012 and 35.2% in 2013. Learner achievement in 2013 across all nine Provinces was higher, but the target was not reached especially in the First Additional Language (FAL), where performance fell far below required levels. This suggests that there is a dire need for a targeted program for FAL English because it is an important language of Teaching and Learning.

1.3.2 READING LEVELS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Department of Education acknowledged through a series of assessments made that majority of learners lack generic skills that make learning possible. This insight is supported by a Grahamstown based Public Benefit Organisation (GADRA) in its 2012 report that, one out of three children at Grade 3 level is literate. They found out that, from Grade 3 up to Grade 6, many learners across the system have not yet developed the basic skills of writing properly and legibly and are unable to read and follow written instructions. They

emphasised that there is a serious lack of basic word "treasure" (vocabulary) for learners, to express themselves in writing especially from Grade 4 upwards. Prinsloo (2008) and Heugh (2013) in their report said that three in every four learners did not even write a short paragraph. Thus they suggested that the absence of extended writing opportunities and practice is a well-established causal factor in educational failure of learners. Prinsloo (2008) and Heugh (2013) maintained that, unless learners develop strong reading and writing expertise, which includes extended writing across several types of text, their future prospects become limited and future life chances are effectively diminished.

Mtshali (2012) refers to reading levels of grade 4 pupils in remote rural areas, saying these learners are often two years behind their urban counterparts. In Grade 5, 75% of learners in rural schools are at risk educationally of scoring dismally low in reading literacy assessment (ibid.). Comparing this report with that of PIRLS 2011, where learners had not yet developed the basic skills required for reading, a similar worrying picture emerges. South African research conducted by the National and Provincial Departments of Education showed that after the first three school years, that is, from Grade 4 onwards, only a minority of learners sufficiently master content subjects across the curriculum. This suggests that majority of learners are unlikely to succeed optimally in secondary school education.

SACMEQ III indicated a very wide difference in learner achievement across the 9 Provinces of South Africa. Below is a snapshot of the Levels and Trends in Grade 6 pupil achievement.

	Pupil Reading Scores 2000	Pupil Reading Scores 2007
Eastern Cape	444	448
Free State	446	491
Gauteng	576	573

KwaZulu-Natal	517	486
Mpumalanga	428	474
Northern Cape	470	506
Limpopo	437	425
North West	428	506
Western Cape	629	583
South Africa	492	495

The findings from SACMEQ showed low levels in reading. These results were drawn from two large scales, cross national research studies of quality of education. The report indicated that South Africa participated in SACMEQ II in 2000 and III in 2007. Achievement results showed that while South African learners had slightly improved their performance across the 2 SACMEQ studies (by 3 points), they were still underperforming in both reading and Mathematics compared to SACMEQ average. The information in this table may be considered important because it allows one to assess the performance of school systems, and to provide information that could be used for strategies aimed at improving the quality of education.

Comparing these results with international results of the PIRLS scores in 2011 of Grade 4 learners a concerning picture emerges. Looking at the results of Colombia and Botswana (both with developing economies like ours) and the International Centre point, South Africa has an unacceptably low score – given the significant investment in education nationally.
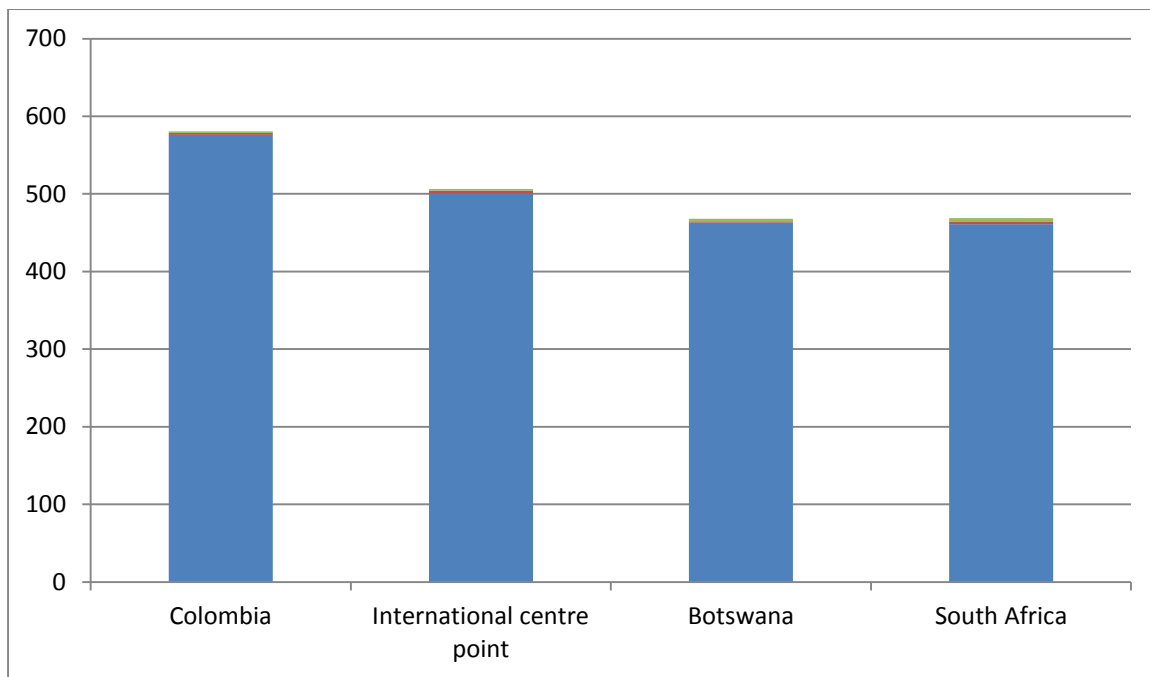
The DoE had its learners participate in several international learner achievement studies and also carried out a number of national learner assessments. Results indicated that learners' literacy levels are very low and are a cause for great concern. The results were below the international fixed score of 500, (Howie et al, 2006). The DoE (2011:6) revealed the percentages of learners reaching at least a "partially achieved" level of performance which varied from 30% to 47%, depending on the grade and subject considered. Learners reaching the "achieved" level of performance varied from 12% to 31%. These results demonstrate that learners are not reading at the level expected of them in a specific grade. For example Horne (2002) found that many Grade 12 learners who cannot read or write possess the literacy level of Grade 4 pupils. Matjila & Pretorious (2004) argued that knowledge of one's home language is not sufficient for the development of reading proficiency. They also discovered that the reading levels of the learners in both languages (isiXhosa and English) were far lower than the expected, given their maturational levels. Learners were reading at about a Grade 3 to 4 levels. Ngwenya (2010:84) expressed his views adding to what other researchers uttered, "General language proficiency is not a reliable predictor of a learners' academic success. The problem of the students' poor reading skills in primary schools is usually carried over into secondary schools and inadvertently higher education institutions, as many students who enter higher education struggle to cope academically". As a result

"Students with reading problems get caught in a "negative cycle" of failed reading outcomes and academic underperformance".

The reading problem is not unique in South Africa, Southern Africa and other developing regions, but also experienced in economically developed parts of the world. Falk (2002:278) says that a "… small but significant number of U.S. first year college students commence their studies with less than adequate reading comprehension strategies and enter developmental reading classes or attend assistant labs". Studies conducted by the American Institute for Research (AIR) reported that 50% of students at four year colleges had inadequate skills to function at a 'proficient" level of literacy, (AIR, 2006).

Govender and Naidu (2006:1) referred to the Grade 12 learners who are entering universities and indicated, "The quality of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) was questioned since the requirements for a pass are so low, namely, students need 40% in three subjects, including their home language and 30% in another three subjects to pass". This could be a significant reason for a high drop-out rate in universities, because higher education requires much more demanding and sophisticated levels of reading, which are steadily declining in learners.

1.4 PROBLEM DELINIATION

The problem that is addressed in this study relates to inadequate reading levels of learners in a particular Eastern Cape Community. Learners in the Lace community are not able to read at required levels. Although much research has been conducted related to reading problems, there is limited information regarding both in- and out-of-school strategies that can be used to improve reading in rural contexts. The knowledge gap that this study addresses is related to the range of potential strategies that could be used to improve reading. The focus shifts from a narrow focus on school based strategies to a broader view of potential strategies available to and in the community. This study intends to explore how reading levels can be improved by drawing on the abilities and assets of individuals and organisations in the school, the community and further field.

The context of this study is a rural community in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. This research is important because it investigates both challenges and opportunities regarding reading and reading improvement. It aims to consider the problem of inadequate reading competence and prevailing ideas about reading levels. The use of a case study approach enables insight regarding a specific context. Details of this nature add to a general understanding of teaching and learning of literacy. In addition pre-service student teachers and others could benefit from a glimpse of the realities of teaching reading in a specific rural community. An asset-based approach functions as a lens regarding the investigation of strategies that could be used to improve reading levels. The purpose of this research is to address the knowledge gap that has been identified. The study will explore various in- and out-of-school strategies that can be used to improve reading proficiency. The following questions will guide the study.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the strategies currently used to teach reading in primary schools?
2. What innovative in-school strategies are available to improve reading levels?
3. What innovative out-of-school strategies are available to improve reading levels?

1.6 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study articulates with the research questions. The aim is thus to investigate strategies that could support and build up the competences of learners in an Eastern Cape community and thereby improve reading levels.

1.7 CONCEPTS

Asset-based Community development: an approach or attitude used to transform lives and find solutions to problems experienced in the community.

Literacy: an ability to read and write at an adequate level proficiency that is necessary for communication.

Reading: a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning from them. Reading takes place in social contexts and reading progress is closely related to the degree of support available in those contexts.

Reading levels: various factors used to determine reading competence of a learner.

Reading strategies: Conscious, systematic plans to direct and improve reader's efforts to decode and make meanings of text.

Reading skills: proficiencies that enable efficient decoding and comprehension that eventually occur without awareness of the mechanisms or actions involved.

Strategies: planned actions designed to achieve a long term goal.

1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 includes an introduction of the research topic. In this section my concerns regarding the inadequate reading levels of learners are outlined. The context of literacy learning in our community is sketched in order to orientate the reader and prepare for the chapters that follow. Chapter2 contains an exploration of selected literature on reading. Chapter 3 explains the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter 4 describes the methods used in the study to elicit and analyse the data. Chapter 5 presents the analysed data that was generated from interviews and observations. Finally in Chapter 6, I make my recommendations and outline conclusions

1.9 CONCLUSION

Reading is a critical component of literacy. Literacy functions as a building block upon which all other learning takes place, therefore there is a great need for the development of love for reading in young children as we will be giving them the greatest gift of life - which is lifelong learning.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will review aspects of literature on literacy, with particular emphasis on reading. I will look at the South African situation, but at the same time acknowledge and consider literacy within an international context. The background and circumstances of the learner impact significantly on learning processes. This idea draws us to look at the importance of the environment and the material used to build a learner's learning of a language and competence to read and write that language and other languages. In this study literacy learning is viewed as an on-going process which does not come to a particular end, but rather continues throughout life, under enabling conditions.

I will be guided by certain scholarly work regarding literacy and report regarding this topic and the current situation in South Africa. I will discuss, literacy acquisition and development, spoken language, sociocultural approach the consequences of literacy, including literacy as a social practice, where learner's background knowledge will be considered as a very important foundation of literacy. A child is not an empty slate therefore learning should start with what the child brings from her environment. Knowing more about New Literacy studies will also be an advantage that will lead us to the understanding of new ways of dealing with reading challenges and opportunities.

After looking at these topics, attention will turn to the reality of the South African education system and language work within that system. I will outline the language and learning policies as set out by the DoE, as well as literacy in relation to the current curriculum, that is Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).

2.2 LITERACY CONSIDERED

This study understands literacy as encompassing the narrower concept of reading. Clarifying the understanding of literacy is an essential part of my study. Literacy is viewed in many ways by different writers. Street and Lefstein (2007:34) indicate "For many, literacy is no

longer viewed simply as a cognitive skill". There is an understanding that literacy is no longer confined to a narrow view or definition. Literacy is seen as cultural practice. People interact and relate to each other in their everyday activities in the societies. Literacy enables learners to be social negotiators, "exploring and exploiting the power of symbolic tools" indicates Dyson (1997:22). Literacy is understood in this inquiry as being influenced by various social institutions. Cultural practices are seen as being shaped by and shaping a range of in school and out of school texts and contexts. There is an attempt to shift from a traditional view of literacy to a more encompassing conception.

Pahl and Rowsell (2005:3) suggest that "Traditionally literacy has been defined by most researchers as the ability to read and write at an adequate level proficiency that is necessary for communication". Street and Lefstein (2007:34) cited another more expansive meaning, which defines literacy "As an object of enquiry and of action – whether for research purposes or in practical programmes". This literacy action involves reading and writing to access knowledge, opportunities and experiences that often reach beyond the immediate lives of learners (Street and Lefstein, 2007). Learners need to achieve reading and writing skills and competences within their first four years of their schooling. Stein and Janks suggest, "If this is not successfully achieved learners will be challenged over time in their efforts to bridge the gap in their reading skills" (2007:4). Reading can be understood as a way a person gets information from written letters or words. However, reading does not simply imply a decoding of sounds and letters but rather reading refers to the ability to make meaning of a text as well as to be able to offer a critique of that text (Janks, 2011). The view of literacy Janks promotes shifts the conception of reading from decoding skill to engaging powerfully with texts (ibid).

Rayner, Forman, Perfetti, Pesetskey, and Seidenberg (2001:32) say that, reading is understood as a number of "distinct literacy activities that have specific functions" such as reading bus schedules and road signs. Rayner et al differentiate between narrow and broad definition of reading. Narrow definitions focus on the adaptation of written texts into spoken texts. "Reading is getting meaning from the print. Literacy includes a variety of educational outcomes – dispositions towards learning, interests in reading and writing, and knowledge of subject matter domains – that go beyond reading" (Rayner et al (2001:35).

Engaging effectively with literacy entails the achievement of a broad range of abilities grounded in cultural and technological context (Perfetti & Marron, 1998). Thus, we cannot separate culture when we are dealing with literacy because culture contains significant information that can be a departure point for literacy. Rayner et al. (2001:33) suggest that the starting point for literacy is reading skills. Chall (1983:80) states that reading develops over different developmental phases, "Ideally, in the pre-school years, the development of emergent literacy takes place. Learners learn to construct meaning from visual cues, in contexts which are print-rich, where books are illustrated and caregivers read and process these books with children". This view contributes to the broad definition of literacy. It concentrates on meaning making, rather than merely a mechanical skills-based process. Literacy becomes a social practice, a means of engaging with others. "Generally children can speak several thousand words, but few of them in print" (Pretorius & Ribbons, 2005:140). According to Weideman and Van Resnberg (2002), literacy capacity, more than any other competence is critical to academic success.

2.3 SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH TO LITERACY

When a child is born, she belongs to a certain society and learns the culture of that society. Each and every society expects the child to follow certain rules and practices. In whatever practice, literacy is involved as it cannot easily be disengaged from most activities. Pahl and Rowsell (2005:10) state that literacy "is always and everywhere situated and, what is more, literacy is inseparable from practices". Children come from different backgrounds in every classroom. When teaching, it is possible to bring in their everyday, out of school experiences and what they love to link with a school lessons. PIRLS (2011:19) indicated that learners' literacy ability is influenced by "home, school and classroom contexts". This would suggest that the communities in which learners live are significant. These communities have different resources, goals and organisational features, but all have much to offer (Boyd, Hayes, Wilson and Bearsley-Smith, 2008; Ennis & West, 2010; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). Mwamwenda (2004:96) indicates that "The society in which the child grows expects that children should produce what they saw in the society and the one modelled by adults around their societies". The child will imitate what she saw from her environment and bring it to school. At school the child is expected to start a new life which will have new sets of

rules. Here the child is expected to develop interest in the acquisition of knowledge in a formal and structured manner. In schools various collections of skills and social practices are brought together. In the case of literacy, both skills and practices can be provided to learners.

Janks (2011) makes a clear distinction between reading as a cognitive skill versus reading as a social practice. Janks acknowledges that reading requires cognitive skills such as recognition letters and sounds and understanding, but does not limit literacy learning to skills acquisition. Janks (2011) promotes the four roles identified by Freebody and Luke (1990). Literacy learning is seen as encompassing various resources or roles: code breaker, text participant, text user and text analyst. After learning decoding skills the learner is able to move to more demanding cognitive strategies. However in her analysis of the 2006 PIRLS results, Janks (2011) indicates that there is little evidence of learners as text users or as text analysts. Thus, initial literacy teaching and learning does not seem to progress beyond low level skills work in classrooms in South Africa.

2.4. THE REALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Deteriorating academic results as well as a decline in literacy competence suggests that "literacy proficiency among South African learners is deteriorating" Navsaria (2011:6). PIRLS (2011:14) suggested that there is a need for reading instruction practices that address the difficulties in language and reading in both Foundation and Intermediate phase otherwise learners are at a considerable risk of failure or repeated failure in primary school and dropping out of school at secondary level.

The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (DoE:2011) emphasises that in Grade 4 many learners start to use their additional language, as a language of learning, which means they need to reach a high level of competence in reading and writing by the end of Grade 3. This means teaching of literacy must be strengthened from the start of school years.

In the second decade of democracy, South Africa's transformation of basic education is still underway and the signs of apartheid still hamper children's ability to learn (Nelson Mandela

Foundation, 2004). Relevant to my study of low literacy levels is that apartheid effectively divided education, had a language policy built on separate development, unequal resources and a cognitively impoverished curriculum that resulted in the majority of the population being under-educated, Navsaria (2011:95).

The Post-apartheid era heralded a significant impact on schools. One of the most dramatic changes that occurred as a result of the Schools Act in South Africa was racial desegregation, which resulted in the migration of learners, "the flow of learners migrated to schools that had previously been open only to Indian and White children (Navsaria 2011:96). Classrooms became linguistically diverse, but there was not a concurrent redeployment of appropriately qualified African-language speaking teachers to relevant schools.

Another historical legacy has been the disparity between urban and rural schools. PIRLS (2011) summarises this problem, indicating rural school achievement is 100 points less than urban schools that are well resourced and with learners not more than 40 learners in a class. In both rural and poor urban schools there is a shortage of classrooms, teachers, and basic educational tools like stationery and textbooks, combined with poor basic needs like water and electricity. There are schools still teaching learners under the trees or in mud structures. Other schools are dilapidated and unsafe. This was identified by the Nelson Mandela Foundation in its research in 2004.

2.5. THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Prinsloo (2008) indicated the country achieved the lowest score on 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), which evaluated the performance of grade 4 learners from 40 countries. Looking at the results of PIRLS 2011, performance still shows little improvement from those of 2006. South Africa was placed last of all participating countries with score of 421.

Language also had an impact on learner performance. It enables the learner to understand what he is reading. Reading is a core competency at school and all academic achievement depends to a lesser or great extent on reading literacy. The ability to read refers to more than just being able to recognise letters and decode words, but it includes the ability to

construct meaning from the written word and familiarity with the various forms and functions of written texts (Pretorius and Machet, 2003:45).

In another assessment, the Annual National Assessment (ANA), South African education was seen as "facing serious challenge". Tests were conducted with grade 1-3 Foundation phase and Grade 4 – 6 (intermediate phase pupils attending government schools. (Dudley 2011:3)

Research clearly states that many teachers in South Africa have an under-developed understanding of teaching literacy, reading and writing. They do not know how to stimulate reading inside, and outside the classroom. There has been a misunderstanding about the role of the teacher in teaching reading in Curriculum 2005 and in the National Curriculum Statement for years, many teachers believed that they did not have to 'teach' reading but simply had to 'facilitate' the process, they believed that learners would teach themselves to read.

2.6 RURAL CONTEXT

In most rural areas there is a lack of culture of learning because homes are mostly headed by illiterate parents. Learners missed the opportunities of being trained by their parents to think and have memory of what they read.

In rural areas children are being taught under most difficult conditions. The rural areas are not in the priority list of the government to be considered in the budget as a result they are acquiring basic literacy skills in their first three year at school because of the factors beyond their control (O'Carroll and Hickman, 2012:3). Learners from these areas are suffering as they are the last to get learning material, for example, the Limpopo crisis on book deliveries. Most learners are living with illiterate grandparents who are unable even to assist them in their education. Feiler (2007:62) states that in many schools in South Africa, the learners are from socio-economically disadvantaged communities where they encounter limited enriched language interaction. Some of the teachers are not patient they lose courage with learners. O'Carrol and Hickman (2012:6) say many preschools suffer from a lack of appropriate teaching resources and sometimes under-qualified staff who are not encouraged to value their role in laying the foundations for language and literacy learning.

This situation affects teachers emotionally and at the end it also affects the learners' reading abilities, leading them to negative attitudes towards reading and that promotes low self-esteem. The example of the Limpopo and some of the Transkei outskirts are teaching under the trees because there are no classrooms. The recent crisis in Limpopo portrayed a picture of the difficulties they experience with the department of Education which in the end affects learner's progress. Research was done in the Limpopo schools, of which 80% of those schools were located in the areas or formal 'squatter' settlement areas where access to various kinds of infrastructure, community facilities and employment opportunities was less likely. SACMEQ (2010:15) measured pupil's socio-economic status levels. There were "Low SES" and "High SES". Scores were generated from pupil responses to questions about home possessions, parental education, quality of the material used to build homes, number of books at home and a source of lighting at home. The results indicated that rural pupils are suffering a great deal as they lack most of the resources necessary to improve their economic status and wellbeing . This will impact their learning adversely. It can lead to drop outs and demotivated learners.

PIRLS (2006) showed that, in South Africa, the mean achievement of schools located in suburban areas was substantially higher than rural schools by more than 100 points. Internationally school-effectiveness studies have shown that social and economic factors are strong predictors of school success. Research internationally, in a number of South African studies have shown significant correlation between learner performance in school and socio-economic class, household wealth and parental education. For an example, SACMEQ (2012:20) reported that majority of South African schools are of quintile 1 and 2 students and can be found in Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape. Research indicated that there is a correlation between poverty and school location. It is not surprising for these three provinces to have poorest results because the greatest numbers of schools are situated in rural areas. Research conducted by Reeves, Heugh, Prinsloo, Macdonald, Netsitangani, Alidou, Diedericks, Herbst (2008:62-65) confirmed that the sample of primary schools were mostly located in predominantly poor communities with low levels of literacy and limited access to books and other print material.

The results of the study showed that these learners seemingly lack essential foundational reading knowledge as well as the early reading-related skills that usually develop when children are exposed to reading material at home or during their preschool years. O'Carrol and Hickman (2012:6) state "In many communities in South African parents are inclined to minimise their role by assuming that preschool and school are proper places for learning". The reason is mostly a lack of confidence in addition to limited knowledge and skills that can empower them to play a central role in supporting their child's literacy and language development - because of illiteracy. The study indicated that rural learners may not yet have developed a concept of print and may have absolutely no clue as to how the teacher and other learners are reading (ibid.). Unfortunately preschools in rural areas lack these resources that can empower learners to learn language effectively and are mostly run by untrained teachers, who are working as care givers. O'Carrol and Hickman (2012:6) say a growing body of research showing that the phase of development from birth to six years is critical to reading development in the school years.

Reading is taught and is learnt within a social context and the school and teachers are a central part of this context, (Pretorius and Machet: 2003:45). This context will affect the way learners acquire literacy as well as the consequences of their literacy accomplishments within the learning environment. A study was conducted in the rural area of KwaZulu-Natal in disadvantaged schools, for reading in the early primary school years, specifically Grade 1 and 4 learners. The findings indicated that the acquisition of literacy skills is the product of set of socio-educational circumstances that translate themselves into specific literacy environments for learners. HSRC (2008:97-98) reported that expectations about what literacy entails depend on the sociocultural context in which specific types of literacy occur, their functions and how they are valued by their communities. The learning environment within the South African context is generally dominated by poverty and inadequate physical resources, overcrowding and lack of books and other essential resources. Reeves et al (2008:95-96) say that schools which are mostly located in poor communities with low levels of literacy and limited access to books and other print material and the nearest library are more than "15 kilometres away from the school", as a result majority of children do not complete high school.

Another research was undertaken at a school in Atteridgeville, a township on the outskirts of Pretoria, which was designed to heighten awareness of the value of reading and importance of vocabulary, in grade 7 learners. These learners are in the senior phase of primary school and will soon be entering high school where they will be faced with more academic vocabulary in context reduced textbooks. According to the report given by researchers, these learners were struggling due to poor vocabulary and difficulties in catching up with average readers. Processing and producing language becomes more cognitively demanding, necessitating the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), if learners are to succeed at school. This research shows that if children do not get support from their early ages due to lack of resources, learners will delay in language acquisition and that will limit their competence.

Although the country is 20 years into a new democracy and theoretically equal opportunities exist for all, in reality these schools are still not providing the same quality of education as those in wealthier, better resourced, historically advantaged areas. Historically the development of language in these areas "has been neglected" (Granville, Janks, Mphahlele, Reed, Watson, Joseph and Ramani, 1998, Sarinjeive, 1999) in Scheepers (2008:31). As a result these learners from these schools may also have been denied access to "specialist academic discourse", both because their own language have not yet developed this kind of terminology and discourse and also because their access to second language has been limited (ibid.).

Wium, Louw and Eloff (2010:14 -21) turned their attention to educators in the South African context, developing a continued professional development (CPD) programme for foundation phase educators in a rural and township context. In support of this initiative, certain Universities are busy recruiting students for the program of developing foundation phase teachers who will be trained to uplift the standard in the early stages of learning. The challenges these educators as already been documented in the literature, for example, implementing a 'new' curriculum, coping with the legacy of apartheid and managing a linguistically diverse classroom. There is hope that with this new introduced curriculum (CAPS), there will be improvement in the foundation phase. The study by O'Connor and Geiger (2009), and Wium et al. (2010) focused on educators in the foundation phase. This is

also a programme that the Department of Education together with particular Universities are busy promoting in the Eastern Cape, that there must be a great focus on the training of more teachers who will have more exposure and be trained for the betterment of the situation. The long term results of poor reading and writing skills among young learners is that they leave primary school with low literacy levels, and face an on-going problem in secondary school, as evidenced by the poor matric results (UNESCO, 2010:125). The efforts of the department signal commitment and determination to eliminate these problems.

2.7 IN-SCHOOL STRATEGIES

Learners are exposed to various strategies to help them learn in different subjects and situations. Nowadays learners are not taught only to know the school subjects but also to be responsible citizens who are able to solve problems on their own. Apart from general strategies to help learners make meaning of their worlds, there are also specific strategies that can be taught so that learners can make meaning of words and texts they encounter. Reading strategies help learners to engage with and create their own texts for in- and out-of-school contexts. These strategies are understood in this study as systematic plans to direct and improve reader's attempts to decode and make meanings of text. Reading skills fall under the umbrella concept of reading strategies. These skills or competencies specifically enable efficient decoding and comprehension. Reading strategies and skills should be planned for and taught explicitly (Combs, 2004).

Supporting the notion of intentional use of strategies, Rhoder (2002) investigated reading strategies that support active, mindful reading. There is a strong resonance between the active approach to reading promoted by Rhoder and the approach taken by Freebody and Luke (1990). Rhoder (2002) refers to mindful learners who are involved and deliberate thinkers. Rhoder indicates of these readers that:

> They plan what they will learn and the strategies they will use, and they control and self-regulate their learning. As readers, they use strategies to organize, elaborate on, and evaluate text (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1996). They integrate what they learn in school texts with their personal experiences to actively construct their own meanings and ideas and to use them in flexible ways. We can teach students to

deliberately use strategies to read and understand text and to do so across a wide variety of texts and disciplines. (Rhoder, 2002: 498).

These learners take responsibility for their reading and engagement with texts. It is precisely this type of learner that is envisaged by the Four Resources Model comprising the roles of code breaker, text participant, text user and text analyst (Freebody and Luke, 1990). This model will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter of the dissertation.

Rhoder (2002) built on Prawat's embedded model of strategy instruction (Prawat, 1991 and 1993), promoting a three step process to help learners become mindful and involved readers: Step 1: Direct instruction in text structure, Step 2: Content-bound, curriculum-free practice and Step 3: Curriculum-bound practice. Freebody and Luke (1990) also promote explicit teaching and a critical engagement with text. Rhoder's process however, does not remain bound to the primary text as in the Four Resources model. In Step 2 Rhoder suggests using texts not directly related to the curriculum. These texts should be "simple, on topics that the students know about, so that they can focus on the strategy and not the topic".

The carefully structured steps outlined above provide a good example of initial work that can be undertaken regarding reading strategies. However, Parera (2006) provides an interesting reminder to avoid 'one size fits all' thinking when dealing with reading strategies. It is important that learners build up a range of strategies and to acknowledge that these strategies do not remain static. Parera suggests that "Repertoires of strategies change in time but also that each reader changes differently" (2006: 69). One of the reasons that a range of reading strategies becomes necessary is that learners have to know how to read across the content areas from the Intermediate Phase onwards. The discourses and typical genre types of subjects differ and learners have to be able to deal with this in order to be successful learners. Often content area teachers have no specific training regarding reading teaching (Combs, 2004). Scaffolding is often promoted as a means of helping learners access content area texts. Combs outlined this strategy as follows:

Scaffolding has come to refer to any instructional activity applied before, during, or after reading that is intended to provide support for immature, poor, or struggling readers. Theoretically, at least, these strategies are designed to be gradually with drawn as students develop independent reading skills (Combs, 2004: 13)

Again we are reminded that the use of reading strategies should be both explicit and needs based. Scaffolding suggests temporary support that is gradually withdrawn as proficiency is built up. Considering these strategies outlined above as examples of what can be done to promote active reading and learning, it would seem imperative that teachers are well trained to model or transfer these strategies and the underpinning skills to their learners.

2.8 OUT-OF-SCHOOL STRATEGIES

School literacies represent a small section of the literacies used in society. In-school literacies and out-of-school literacies both contribute to the identity formation and ways of being of learners as readers. Understandings of out-of-school literacies grew out of a range of literacy work, including that of Gee, 1996; Heath 1983; Scribner and Cole, 1981 and Street 1993a and 1993b. Hull and Schultz (2001) indicate that the out of school literacy accomplishments of children, teenagers and adults is often more promising than their school literacy accomplishment. This would suggest that only considering school literacy competence, presents a limited picture of an individual's literacy potential. Schultz (2002: 356) cautions against only considering in-school literacy as literacy that counts:

When teachers take their experience with students in the classroom as the sum of their knowledge of students' interests and abilities, they are taking a narrow slice of students' lives and treating it as the whole.

Out-of-school literacy activities often allow participants to understand themselves as "capable learners and doers", an identity that contrasts with their view of themselves in terms of school based literacy (Hull and Schultz, 2001: 575). In addition to a deeper understanding of themselves as literate beings, out-of-school literacy practice reminds us of the myriad of literacies available.

Alvermann (2008) has offered much insight regarding out-of school literacies. Her work with teenagers regarding literacies including media and digital literacies has contributed significantly to our understanding of the range interests and literacy accomplishments of young people. Alvermann and colleagues have helped to reconceptualise the literacies prevalent in the lives of many youngsters (Alvermann, Hagood and Williams, 2001; Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps and Waff, 2006). While out-of school literacy support by means of reading clubs is a relatively new intervention in South Africa, Alvermann, Young, Green and Wisenbaker (1999) were working with extra mural reading clubs a decade and a half ago. Their insights can be usefully incorporated into the reading club work initiated in South Africa.

It is important to view the context of this research study, a rural area in the Eastern Cape, as a place of possibility and not to simply disregard out-of-school literacy success in South African urban centers and overseas as beyond the reach of rural communities. Instead of a deficit perspective regarding reading and literacy opportunities, an asset based approach can be adopted.

2.9 ASSET BASED APPROACH

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach that focusses on the strengths of a community. A capacity assessment is done to find out what gifts, talents and capabilities exist in individuals, organisations and the community as a whole. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) did seminal work regarding ABCD. Since then ABCD has been taken up in various fields including health, social work and education. Sharpe, Greaney, Lee and Royce in Mathie and Cunningham succinctly outline the value of the ABCD process:

> An assets orientation allows community members to identify, support, and mobilize existing community resources to create a shared vision of change, and encourages greater creativity when community members do address problems and obstacles. (2003: 205).

ABCD presents a new way of thinking about development work. There is a shift from problem to possibility. Instead of a needs orientated, dependency approach there is a move towards a community driven process. The community is seen as having agency instead of being positioned as needing external help. Mathie and Cunningham (2003: 474) outline this positively orientated approach:

> As an alternative approach, the appeal of ABCD lies in its premise that people in communities can organise to drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilising existing (but often unrecognised) assets, thereby responding to and creating local economic opportunity. In particular, ABCD draws attention to social assets: the particular talents of individuals, as well as the social capital inherent in the relationships that fuel local associations and informal networks.

ABCD has been used successfully in South Africa. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006), Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2003) outline studies where asset based work impacted positively on marginalised communities and brought about positive and empowering change.

2.10 CONCLUSION

After having reviewed the literature, I had foundational understandings to lead my research. The next step was to establish a theoretical framework that would act as a lens to focus the search for strategies that could improve reading levels of learners.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODCTION

In my school I am teaching almost all classes from Grade 8 to Grade 12. I have nearly two decades teaching experience in a high school environment. I became concerned that the level of competence in reading and writing seem to be deteriorating each year. We are moving from one system to another as curriculum designers see the need for a change in school teaching and learning. At my school we are teaching many learners who are from disadvantaged backgrounds, and some of the demands of the curriculum are not favouring their situation. As teachers, we are supposed to include and keep in mind all learners in our planning of lessons. But still there are learners who are left behind and there is no time to attend them properly. This leads to the problem of learners who cannot read and write adequately at a high school level because there is a gap that was not closed from the beginning of their primary school years.

3.2 THE FOUR RESOURCES MODEL

In trying to get a sharper perspective regarding the literacy problem at my school and our feeder schools in the community, I have chosen Freebody and Luke's Four Resources Model. This model will be used as a lens to view current literacy practices in our schools (1990). Freebody and Luke (1990) outline the model as follows,

> We will elaborate the position that a successful reader in our society needs to develop and sustain the resources to adopt four related roles: code breaker ('how do I crack this?'), text participant ('what does this text mean?'), text user ('what do I do within this, here and now?'), and text analyst ('what does all this do to me?').

Freebody (1992:1) indicated that the four roles are "necessary but not sufficient for readers in a post-modern, text based culture". These four roles have been adopted and adapted by teachers and curriculum developers at first in Australia and later in many countries around the world. In the following section each of the roles will be examined. Thereafter a link will be made to the South African literacy context.

3.2.1 Code-breaker

The main focus of this role is recognizing and using text features. These could include the alphabet, sounds, spelling conventions and patterns of the text. Freebody (1992:2) argues, "To be a successful reader, an individual needs to successfully engage the technology of the written text script, that is the nature of the relationship between spoken sounds and written symbols, and the contents of that relationship".

3.2.2 Text-participant

Here, Freebody (1992:3) says "The process of comprehension implicates the reader in the role of inferred connections between textual elements and additional material required to fill out the un-explicated aspects of text. The reader is engaged as a meaning maker and as a participant in the meaning systems of the text that can be found in adult –child interactions in the reading sessions". An adult is supposed to walk along with the learner in making meaning of the text and relating the story to her interests or feelings.

3.2.3 Text-user

Freebody (1992:5) said "Being a successful reader is being able to participate in those social activities in which written text plays a central part". Learners also learn through social experiences, what our culture considers to be adequate reading for school, work, leisure, or civil purposes. Freebody (ibid) further said that reader in this role knows about and acts on the different cultural and social functions that various texts perform both inside and outside the school. This enables the individual to engage appropriately with texts.

3.2.4 Text-analyst

Freebody (1992:5) says that this role can also be called "critical reading", where the learner is required to read and give a thought to what she is reading. This refers to an awareness of the fact that all texts are crafted objects. The teacher has to ask questions that will provoke thought. Freebody (1992) says that "The important point is that if you, as a reader, can successfully decode this text, can successfully comprehend it, relating it to your social knowledge, and can successfully take part in literacy activities that may be based on such a

text, a fully successful reading of this text calls for nothing less than an analysis of the ways in which the text constructs a version of you, the reader".

The Four Resources Model of Freebody and Luke (1990) can help learners to become the critical and creative thinkers our curriculum requires. They can be assisted to move from a basic engagement with and decoding of the text to a sophisticated and empowered interaction with the word and consequently the world they inhabit. The Four Resources model can be used in the Foundation Phase, the Intermediate Phase and right through into the high school years and beyond (ibid).

3.3 USING THE FOUR ROLES OF THE READER TO MAKE SENSE OF THE PIRLS RESULTS

Janks (2011) examined the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 results for South Africa. In this analysis, Janks set the skills expected in PIRLS against Freebody and Luke's four roles of the reader. Janks (2011:27) came to the conclusion that, in general, learners in South African schools do not proceed past decoding and the basics of comprehension. Her assertion regarding early readers in South Africa was that, "They are not taught to be text 'participants', text 'users' or text 'analysts'". This would suggest that South African educators need to rethink the way in which they teach literacy - particularly in the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase where reading is first established and supported.

Janks refers to a summary report regarding the PIRLS South African results. A section of this report contains research by Long and Zimmermann regarding literacy practices in schools. Long and Zimmerman in Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmermann, Long, Du Toit, Scherman and Archer (2006) examined the school literacy curriculum. Long and Zimmermann came up with twelve reading strategies based on contemporary reading theories. Janks drew up the following table (2011:34). The Roles of the Reader (Freebody and Luke, 1990) are placed alongside the twelve Strategies for Reading devised by Long and Zimmermann (2006)

Table 2:

Roles of the Reader (Freebody and Luke (1990)	Strategies for reading (Long and Zimmerman, (2006)

TEXT DECODER	Knowing letters (1)
Cracks the code of the text with knowledge of phonics, phonemics and sight words.	Knowing letter-sound relationships (2)
	Reading words (3)
	Reading isolated sentences (4)
	Reading connected text (5)
TEXT PARTICIPANT	Identifying main idea (6)
Making meaning by taking meaning from and bringing meaning to texts. Relates meanings in the text to own ideas, values and experiences.	Explaining or supporting understanding (7)
	Comparing with personal experience (8)
	Making predictions (9)
	Making generalisations and inferences (11)
TEXT USER	Comparing different texts (for different purposes) e.g. literacy and information texts (9)
Range of texts used for different purposes	Describing style and structure (12)
TEXT ANALYST	Not included in the 12 strategies
The social effects of text - who benefits?	
	Evaluation questions are not included in the 12 strategies: Explaining the possible social effects of texts. Explaining who is included and excluded. Explaining who benefits and who is disadvantaged. Evaluating whether the text is fair or not.
	Explaining the effects of word, image and style choices in creating these social effects. (12)
	Explaining what the text wants the reader to believe and why.
	What if questions invite students to consider alternative possibilities.

Janks referred to the PIRLS South Africa findings of Howie et al (2006). In general, early readers in Grade 1 and 2 in our country are text decoders. Janks asserts that these children "can move from letter recognition to the reading of connected text (Strategies 1 – 5)". More

demanding strategies can be introduced once learners have some basic reading competency. This typically could start taking place in Grade 3 and 4 and then be developed in the remaining years of the primary school. By the time learners arrive in high school it is possible for them to approach reading across the curriculum critically and competently if they are well versed in the four roles identified by Freebody and Luke.

In the next section the relationship between the Four Resources Model (Freebody and Luke, 1990) and the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement is considered.

3.4 CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT (CAPS) AND THE FOUR RESOURCES MODEL

Theorists agree that there is no single best way to teach literacy (Freebody, 1992; Freebody & Luke, 1990). "The value of the Four Resources Model is that it offers teachers explicit information on how to teach all four roles or "resources" (Freebody 1992, Freebody and Luke 1990). This model encourages the teaching of reading and writing in authentic contexts. The CAPS literacy approach is positioned in opposition to use of a single literacy method, for example, it uses different methods like storytelling and listening to stories, use of pictures, using gestures and real objects (DoE:2011:10).

The aim of CAPS is to ensure that "Children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives" (DoE, 2011:4). This curriculum promotes knowledge in and of local contexts, while holding in balance global realities (DoE, 2011). An innovation of the CAPS Foundation Phase curriculum is the emphasis on learning an additional language. In Grade 2 and 3, it is suggested that focus should be given to developing literacy in the First Additional Language. This is very important for children who will be using English as the language of learning in Grade 4", (DoE, 2011:13). Learners need to be able to read and write in all subjects. The majority of South African children are required to use English from the Intermediate Phase onwards.

This will require high levels of literacy, and especially a wide vocabulary, in English (DoE: 2011). This will not be easily achieved in our schools. If we are looking forward to producing a learner who will be able to use English effectively, it has to start with the teachers. Many

teachers especially in rural schools use isiXhosa predominantly in their day to day communication. There is often not sufficient focus on English as an Additional Language. CAPS curriculum is designed to rectify this by giving a mandate that "the First Additional Language must be taught from Grade 1" (DoE, 2011:10).

In CAPS (DoE: 2011), many activities are designed for promoting reading. Activities outlined in the CAPS document (DoE, 2011:12) include:

- Exposure to environmental print – learners in the Foundation Phase should be exposed to a great deal of environmental print in order to support the development of emergent literacy competence. This environmental print can be in the home language and also in the additional language.

- Shared reading – introduced in Grade R and continued throughout the Foundation Phase. This reading activity is an important focus for language and literacy development. It gives learners exposure to their home and additional language in a meaningful, supportive context.

- In Grade 2, learners begin a new activity in their additional language: Group Guided Reading. However, they will be familiar with the activity since they will have been doing it in the home language from Grade 1.

- Paired and Independent Reading – provides a way of giving children reading practice and encouraging reading for enjoyment.

- Phonics – the first stage of learning to decode written language is oral – learning to isolate the different sounds of the language. Later both the phoneme and grapheme are used.

- Word recognition – children learn to recognise sight words (or 'look and say' words) by seeing them repeatedly. High frequency words can be learned by regular exposure to, and drill of these words.

- Comprehension – learners must be able to understand what they read.

Some or all of the roles identified by Freebody and Luke (1990) can be used with the above listed literacy activities. In order to do so, the teacher in the Foundation Phase will have to

plan carefully and select a range of real and relevant texts that match the needs and interests of her learners.

In the Intermediate Phase CAPS document, DoE (2011:12) a "text based" approach is followed and its value is clearly outlined. This continues to resound well with the approach promoted by Luke and Freebody (1990). The curriculum guidelines indicate,

> The purpose of a text-based approach is to enable learners to become competent, confident and critical readers, writers, viewers and designers of texts. It involves listening to, reading, viewing and analysing texts to understand how they are produced and what the effects are. Through this critical interaction, learners develop the ability to evaluate texts. The text-based approach also involves producing different kinds of texts for particular purposes and audiences. This approach is informed by an understanding of how texts are constructed. (DoE, 2011:12)

Learners in the Intermediate Phase can become "competent" readers if they are good *code breakers* and *meaning makers*. In order for them to become "confident and critical readers" the bar has to be raised. Teachers should help learners to become *text users*, thereby understanding how different texts work. In addition learners need to be helped to become *text analysts* in order to grow into a critical approach regarding the texts they read and write.

As we can see, there is a link between Freebody and Luke's theory and the current curriculum being introduced in South Africa. Both the Four Resources Model and the CAPS curriculum are shaping children for different social purposes. Teachers and learners need to be aware of this. The curriculum is not neutral. DoE (2011:5) states, "There is an agenda to realise certain outcomes including producing critical and creative problem solvers". The National Curriculum Statement Grade 1-12, DoE (2011:5) aims to produce learners that are able to "identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking". Therefore children need to be given opportunities to explore texts, and also produce a range of text themselves. Given the freedom to move beyond decoding to become text participants, text users and text analysts, in relation to reading and writing, could work significantly towards the aims and objectives of the South African Curriculum

Policy for schools. Proficiency in the Four Roles outlined by Freebody and Luke (1990) could go a long way to improving poor academic performance of our learners.

3.5 CONCLUSION

Having insight into literacy practices employed in the Foundation Phase and the Intermediate Phase in certain sites in our district, could shed light on how we can improve reading levels. More proficient reading may lead to love of literacy – both on the part of learners and teachers. It will be important for us to adopt effective strategies linked to the learning and teaching of reading. These approaches could recognise and take advantage of the realities of our community context.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodology employed in this research undertaking as well as the selected methods used to generate data.

4.1 QUALITATIVE RSEARCH

A qualitative approach was used to obtain relevant information because I have personal experiences related to the phenomenon in question. I would like to develop my understanding concerning the literacy issues of the learners at my school. In my inquiry, I set out to gain a better understanding of the experiences of others who have a close experience of the realities of literacy teaching in our community. For this reason I was interested in the literacy practices of teachers at our feeder schools. As the study was qualitative in nature, it was intended to approach the world 'out there' and to understand, describe and sometimes explain social phenomena 'from the side' in a number of different ways (Flick, 2007). I have set out to analyse experiences of individuals and groups. My primary approach focussed on observing and recording practices of local teachers concerning the teaching and learning of reading.

> Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, "involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world". This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. A naturalistic approach means that I interact with my participants and observed them in their day-to-day context. "It involves the use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – such as personal experience, and observations, instances that describe the routine and problem moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (Denzin and Lincoln (2005:2).

Through the use of interviews, observations and field notes, I looked at multiple perspectives on the same situation and then made a general overview of the strategies that can be used to improve reading levels of learners in our community. I visited two local primary schools with different socio-economic circumstances. I chose a school from a rural

area and a school from a semi-rural area, situated in a small town. My focus was on three grades, namely Grade 1, 3 and 6 as I was interested in the strategies that were used at the beginning of formal learning (Grade 1) and the exit point of the Foundation Phase, (Grade 3) and the exit point of Intermediate Phase, that is, Grade 6.

4.2 UNDERPINNING PHILOSOPHY

My research was guided by an interpretive philosophy in which individuals and groups were interviewed and observed (Williams, Rice and Rogers, 1988). This research study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:181) argue that such an approach seeks to "understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors" and consequently may be described as interpretive and subjective". This required investigation so that I could come to an understanding of the problem and be able to generate rich evidence that could be used to shed light on the situation regarding the reading levels of our learners. Mbelani (2007:31) argued that "The interest is in the process rather than outcomes, in the context rather than specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation". Thus I was intent on discovering and understanding, rather than coming up with specific answers and solutions.

4.3 CASE STUDY

Rule and John (2011:1) describe case study as a "systemic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge". According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002:181) a case study is "the study of an instance in action and enables readers to understand how ideas and abstract principles can fit together". A case study can access situations in ways that are not always relevant to a numerical analysis approach. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (ibid) further stated that case study can establish cause and effect, indeed one of the strengths of case studies is that they "observe effects in real contexts, recognising that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects". It requires a researcher to be part of the social environment which involves full understanding and awareness of phenomenon (Williams, Rice and Rogers, 1988).

Cohen et al (2002:181) saw case study, as portraying "What is it like" to be in a particular situation, to grasp the "close-up reality and thick description of participants lived

experiences" regarding a particular situation. Hence it is important for the events and situations to be allowed to speak for themselves rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher. I am working directly with learners who have inadequate literacy competences. The intention of this inquiry was to obtain an understanding of contributing factors that impact on the performance of learners on literacy. Then the focus shifted to discover actions and activities that can be used to help learners. The aim of this study is thus to investigate strategies that could support and build up the literacy competencies of learners in our community.

4.4 RESEARCH SITE

Sampling is an essential part of research. I conducted interviews and observations at two sites - one in a rural primary school and the other a school in a small town. The reason for the choice of these sites was firstly convenience, secondly their different social contexts. These schools are our feeder schools. It was of utmost importance for me to understand the impact of the context on the pupils' learning, the teacher's experiences in their teaching, as well as the methods of teaching used in different schools. I also wanted to understand the results of these schools, especially in literacy, considering their socio-economic backgrounds and the school situation. If we have a problem with our Grade 8 learners, it could be useful to start at the primary schools to find out the circumstances related to literacy learning and teaching. My interest was in discovering what was taking place in the Foundation and Intermediate phases. These phases were of critical importance in building a solid basis for future learning. My focus was on Grade 1, 3 and 6 teachers, and their learners as these are key grades in the primary school.

I decided to change the names of the schools used as part of an interest in confidentiality. The one in the rural area was given a new name Sivuyisiwe (meaning, *We have been made glad*) and the other one was Siyabonga (meaning, *Expressive of thanks*) I chose Sivuyisiwe because it uses isiXhosa as the language of learning and teaching. The other research site (Siyabonga) used to be a Model C school and the medium of instruction is English.

Siyabonga consisted of learners with different home languages, for an example, English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa and a local language used in Ghana, since there was a fairly large

Ghanaian population in the town. Siyabonga used to be a very good school. It was well-known for its previous successes. Based on this reputation, the school draws academically stronger learners. It has a stable staff. Most of the staff members were at that school for more than ten years. For example, the Grade 1 teacher had 11 years working experience in the same school, the Grade 3 teacher had 15 years in that school teaching the same grade and Grade 6 teacher had 8 years. This information was provided during my visits to the school. Siyabonga is a well-resourced school. The school has a Library, computer lab, enough textbooks and reading books. Some materials are supplied by the government and others were donated by parents. The resources that were used by the teachers during my visits were charts, flash cards, reading books and workbooks. There were other charts and flash cards made by teachers for their lessons. The material used was written in English. Teachers of this school were clear about their workload responsibilities. This was evident from their actions in the classroom and information provided during interviews.

Sivuyisiwe is located in a rural area. The condition of the buildings was not good at all. It had broken windows and needed maintenance. However, there was a strong, secure fencing around the school. Learners were unable to come and go at will because the gates were always locked during school hours. Many learners at Sivuyisiwe had difficult home circumstances which resulted in a lack of adequate nutrition. Learners were receiving food from the Department of Education. There were not enough resources for optimal learning to take place. There were few textbooks and reading books. As a result I donated some reading books to support learning. They had books and stationery delivered to them by the department of Education, for example, workbooks and exercise books. There were charts, posters and flash cards made by teachers evident in classrooms.

Despite the shortage of resources, teaching and learning was taking place. The conditions explained above drew my attention and curiosity. I was interested to know how they teach reading and cope with the difficult circumstances. I wondered if the strategies would be the same as in a well-resourced school. What was interesting was that, teachers were always on time for their periods and learners did not get a chance of loitering around and disturbing other classes and other learners too. The information I got from the teachers was that sometimes learners arrive late at school because of the distance from home to school. This

problem was a little bit disturbing because the first period did not start on the set time. Absenteeism was one of the problems teachers cited, especial on pay days where learners had to go and assist their grandparents. When they come back the teacher had a responsibility of closing the gap. It was really not an easy situation.

4.5 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

In my study I wanted to understand the contexts of a rural school and a town school. I used the particular schools mostly for their availability and their socio-economic status. Participants were Grade 1, 3 and 6 teachers in the Fort Beaufort District schools. The sample of teachers was used to obtain particular data for this study. I used purposeful sampling. Struwig and Stead (2001:122) state that participants show certain characteristics that the researcher is interested in. I chose this method because it will enable me to yield information rich data and be able to understand the problem. It will not be possible for me to generalise my findings to all South African or Eastern Cape schools. Whilst the results of my study could not be generalised to the broader population, the results could still be useful for other schools or districts situated in similar environments.

 I wanted to understand not to judge. My intention was to try to make meaning of the problems that were encountered by teachers in these two schools. In both schools where I conducted my research, they followed a 10 day cycle. I visited them during their literacy periods which were usually from 9h00 until 10h00. I started collecting data on 6 June 2011 and continued until 5 September 2011. I used specific dates and periods that were suitable for both me and teachers.

4.6 ETHICAL MEASURES

Initially I consulted the District Office to get a permission to use two of the schools for my study. Then I obtained permission from the principals of each school to use their schools for this research. I described the nature of my study to the principals and highlighted the purpose of the inquiry. The principals had no reservations regarding my request because they hoped to gain from the results of the study. I presented a letter I obtained from the District Office (DoE) giving me permission to visit the selected schools. The teachers of the identified classes gave me different dates and times (refer to the appendix for dates and

times). In my application to the university Ethics Committee I included information showing that the Department of Education had given permission for the research to take place. My ethics application gave details of the envisaged study and the intended research methodology. I had to indicate whether there were anticipated risks for participants. I also had to specify how I would get consent from all the participating teachers and how I would provide feedback after the study.

 I understood that, I may ethically be prohibited from citing what I discovered through my research, if it could violate confidentiality or privacy or be potentially damaging to certain individuals. The basic ethical principles of research were used as a way of protecting the participant's rights as designed by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Ethics Committee. I explained to the teachers identified for my research the purpose of my research. I assured them that confidentiality would be respected. I will ensure confidentiality by not mentioning names of participants instead I will use pseudo names. Learners and teacher's identities will be kept in secret in this study and afterwards when I report on the study. I will not allow anyone to listen to recordings or read the notes taken. Data collected will not be shared with colleagues in a way that would allow the easy identification of the people to which the data relate.

I handed out consent forms to be signed by the teachers of the selected grades and that was Grade 1, 3 and 6 teachers (see appendix). I asked permission to record interviews. They had no problem as long as I would respect confidentiality. They all agreed to become research participants. I gained confidence in working with these teachers as I met with them over an extended period of time. The teachers also gained confidence in me as they realised that I was trying to understand about teaching and learning of reading. I was not there to assess them or judge them.

4.7 DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUES

Struwig and Stead (2001:121) stated "Qualitative research focuses primarily on the depth or richness of the data and therefore qualitative research generally select samples purposefully rather than randomly". As already stated, interviews and observations were the primary means of collecting data. Within the context of qualitative research, the immediate result of

observation was descriptive. This was equally true of interviewing. The interviews were an efficient and valid way of understanding the perspectives of the teachers. Observation enabled me to draw conclusions about the teacher perspectives that I could not obtain by relying exclusively on interview data.

In addition, I investigated by means of interviews, the available school and community assets that are currently used or could potentially be used by teachers to strengthen and support teaching and learning in each school. Informed by an asset-based approach (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993) I looked for talents and competencies that learners, teachers and others possess which could be used as resources to promote learning in general and literacy learning specifically. In addition to considering individuals as potential assets, I also investigated which organisations and businesses were potentially available in these communities. My approach was informed by Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), where I explored social networks that could bring about the change (Ennis and West, 2010; Mathie and Cunningham, 2011; Snow, 2011) Ennis and West (2010) referred to this practice as a strength based approach to community work – rather than a needs based approach. They also referred to it as a "philosophy of practice", "generally not a fully-fledged theory of practice but rather an approach or attitude a worker may hold".

Mathie and Cunningham (2011:180) outlined four complementarities of ABCD approach, which are as follows: "the ABCD approach takes the position that people have strengths and capacities which are the key motivators for taking action proactively. This underplays the problem and is more solution or opportunity orientated". It recognises the attributes and potential of contributions of people. "ABCD stresses the key role played by formal and informal associations, networks and extended families as community level, and by social relationships that connect local initiatives to external windows of opportunity", Mathie and Cunningham (2011:181). It also provides practical tools and methods that can be used by community members to identify and link assets. These include tools for mapping assets (emphasising skills and talents), and analysing the local economy. The ABCD approach is citizen-driven approach. It encourages a proactive role for members of the community. There is a distancing from the passive, dependent role of welfare recipients. ABCD can build up and strengthen the capacity to use both internal and external resources.

4.7.1 Secondary data

Johnson and Christensen (2004:192) define secondary data as "existing data or readily available" data. It includes personal documents, official documents, physical data and archived research data. In this study, I looked at results of learners at the two research sites. The purpose was to check the severity of the reading challenges in the two schools. These results will be analysed and discussed in Chapter 5 as part of the data analysis process.

4.7.2 Observations

Murray – Thomas (2003:60) defines observation as "gathering information by means of watching and /or listening to events, then recording occurrences". I was mindful during the observations to be careful and guard against seeing what I wanted to see rather than observing what was really taking place. I observed teachers in their classes, watching the strategies they were using and the resources used whilst teaching. I sat down and recorded what was happening in the classroom guided by my research questions. I observed the use of the resources that were in the class and their relevance to the lesson. I wanted to see their impact on lesson and also on helping learners to understand. Observation requires no special equipment and is thus "amenable to the contexts", Murray-Thomas (2003:62). Observation was amenable in that it suited the context of my research. It was important to see the teachers in action in addition to listening them tell about their literacy teaching experiences.

4.7.3 Interviews

Denzin and Lincoln (2005:643) say that interviews "generate useful information about the context and its meanings". I used interviews because they allowed more opportunities to obtain information as the interviewees answered various questions both structured and unstructured. I interviewed teachers of the selected Grade, 1, 3, and 6. Both schools gave me different dates and time for observations and interviews. In June I went to my schools on the 06, 15 and 20th June 2011 and the second phase of visits were on the 11, 14 August and 02 and 05 September 2011. Johnson and Christensen (2004:178) indicated that the interview is an "Interpersonal encounter, where the interviewer has to establish rapport with the interviewee and the interviewer must be impartial to the responses of the

interviewee". Interviews produce "situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes" (ibid). I primarily used unstructured interviews and an informal conversational interview style. I had few questions prepared for that but, I was also guided teachers responses from the questions I asked them. Although observation often provides a direct and powerful way of learning about peoples' behaviour and the context in which this occurs, interviewing is also a valuable way of gaining a description of actions and events. Interviews could provide additional information that was missed in observation, and could be used to check the accuracy of the observations.

4.8. ASSET BASED APPROACH

This is a relationship driven process and should be based on the "strengths and talents of individuals involved and not on the weaknesses and problems" (Kretzman and McKnight, 1993:3). The implication of this was that I did not only focus on what the teachers told me in interviews. I also investigated what was present within the social system of our community to promote and support learning. This asset-based practise did not concentrate on problems, but rather on capacity building in both learners and teachers. I was looking for general strategies, available in the community that could be used to promote learning and also to improve reading levels. McDonald (1997:11) indicates, "It starts with the status quo. It supports strengths and helps to create connected caring communities". I accessed the community assets in a second set of interviews.

Using a group interview format, I gathered all my participants (Grade 1, 3 and 6 teachers in each school), in one place. I asked them to write down all the assets in their schools which contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning in general. I also asked about improving reading specifically. Teachers had the opportunity to share their data and add to the ideas suggested by colleagues. In addition, I searched the internet for organisations that could potentially be of assistance in promoting literacy in our community. All this information was used to map the current and potential assets available to our community. Taking this approach meant that my research took a holistic view of the situation and considered both problems and opportunities in relation to literacy in our community. When I give feedback on my research, I will invite community members to draw up an action plan

with me regarding the assets we have mapped. Based on this we can take specific actions to address learning and reading improvement.

4.9. RELIABILITY OF DATA

Guidelines for testing validity in qualitative research are contested. Some authors query usefulness of validation from a qualitative perspective. Maxwell (2005:109) stated, "The validity of results is not guaranteed by following some prescribed procedure. It depends on the relationships of your conclusions to reality, and there are no methods that can completely assure that you have captured this". There might be threats regarding the validity of data. Self-report data from teachers might be flawed as teachers could try to protect themselves from being judged and labelled as 'inefficient teachers'. Maxwell (1992:109) suggested that "validity threats were made implausible by evidence not methods". Thus the methods I chose were a means of obtaining evidence that could help me rule out these validity threats. I had to consider the values of the participants well as my own. It was important to operate in a way that participants could trust me and to expect and treat participants as trustworthy professionals.

In qualitative research, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005:339) recommend that a researcher "discovers categories and patterns in the data". The researcher should "engage in critically challenging the very patterns that seem so apparent" (ibid). The researchers should search for other, possible explanations for the data and connections among them. Alternative explanations always exist, "the researcher should search for, identify and describe them, and then demonstrate why the explanation offered is the most plausible of all" (ibid.). Trying to get substantial evidence and recording all the data as carefully as possible, enabled me to refer to that data in detail so that I could come up with creditable interpretations of the situation.

I dealt with alternative interpretations and validity threats by asking the participants to comment on the interpretations and to give feedback. This helped me to check my own biases and assumptions after all the interviews had been completed. I was careful not be led by the initial look of things. I tried to remain observant and open minded. This mind set helped to guide me to interpret the information from all observations and interviews.

Triangulation was used to allow more effective assessment of the explanations that emerged. Visiting schools more than once gave me some confidence about the data I had obtained. I analysed the data I got from the first visit with other visits so that I could check consistency in my data. That allowed me to build my certainty about the data. As I used unstructured and informal interviews, reviewing the data after each visit enabled me to think more deeply about what I needed. I was able to identify what I was not clear about during my first visit and address this in subsequent visits. It was important during the data collection process to examine how the data I collected, supported or challenged my ideas about what is going on.

Strydom, Fouche and Delport, (2001:339) proposed four goals for qualitative approach. "Credibility" is an alternative to internal validity, in which the goal is to demonstrate that the study was conducted in such a way that the substantive data was correctly identified. "Transferability" is suggested as an alternative to generalisability. "Dependability" is strived for as the researcher explains and justifies changing insights emerging as the understandings are refined. "Confirmability" is the orientation of the researcher in terms of truthfulness and objectivity. These are useful ideas that I have used to validate my interpretations.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Consistencies and similarities in the information collected enabled themes to emerge from different sources. This allowed me to report on what was happening in schools visited regarding literacy learning. Information arising from the research shed a light on gaps in early stages of learning and how teachers, parents, the Department of Education and the general community can be involved in assisting learners and schools with learning in general and specifically with reference to improving reading levels.

I collected data using different instruments, like note taking and recording during interviews. After collecting the data I sat down and listened to the tapes and consolidated the information from notes taken during observation with the tapes used on interviews. I rewrote the information and re organised my notes. On subsequent visits I shared my data with the teachers so that they were clear that I was trying to make meaning and not to judge them.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The CAPS guidelines provided specific information regarding the teaching of literacy (DoE, 2011). The teachers I observed and interviewed were on the way to where the curriculum required them to be. When I visited classrooms I observed teachers using some of the strategies suggested by the DoE. As yet, none have achieved all that is expected. There were many reasons for slow or problematic implementation of the curriculum. Coetzee (2008:74) says that "teachers have not been sufficiently trained to cope with the demands of the Language in Education policy". This education policy is fundamental to language and literacy work in South African schools. Insufficient engagement with this policy and the CAPS language documents seemed to be a challenge at both schools visited. I could see that when they were teaching reading, for example, not attending to struggling learners.

Learner's language competence is expected to increase as they progress to higher classes. For instance, CAPS (DoE: 2011:33) stated that a Grade 6 learner (ready to exit the Intermediate Phase) should have a vocabulary of between "5500 and 6000" common words.

Learners who study other learning areas through their additional language should aim for 6000 words. This was not always possible for learners in the rural areas who lacked exposure to the language of schooling, who also lived in an environment that was not conducive to learning. Rhodes (2002:498) says "Classroom atmosphere plays a role in supporting learning. Learners are able to learn in a nonthreatening situation". I am using this quotation to clarify the importance of the environment where effective learning should be taking place. The environment at Sivuyisiwe seemed to lack this kind of an atmosphere. This environment lacked the most basic elements for literacy development as was evident, for example, in the absence of community and school libraries at Sivuyisiwe and suitable print material in general. Classrooms were not in a condition that was recommended for learning.

Insights gained during this research process led me to believe that in order to change the situation, regarding inadequate literacy levels, committed teachers and parents or caregivers will have to work together and identify all the resources that could make a difference. Teachers and learners from high poverty schools had a challenge which obviously could not be changed in short term. Primary schools need textbooks, workbooks and a range of storybooks in the African languages and English for learners to practise their reading in order to become skilled readers. At both schools workbooks were enough but the challenge at Sivuyisiwe was a shortage of textbooks and story books. The DoE (2011:10) states that learners should develop proficiency in reading and viewing a wide range of literacy and non-literacy texts. This is the foundation on which later academic success could be built. In addition to sourcing more reading materials, there needed to be support for teachers in terms of their understanding of the teaching of literacy. Teachers needed to be better informed about what reading entails so that they could "assess their learner's reading development more realistically" Rayner et al (2001:34). In addition to challenges regarding assessment of literacy, actual teaching practice needed development. Parera (2006) suggests that there is little if any training in the teaching of reading, and teachers remain confused on which strategies could be used.

Two relatively simple approaches are provided by way of example. The DoE (2011:12) states that environmental print could be used as a "starting point for children's emergent literacy".

The concept and possibilities associated with environmental print was relatively new to the Foundation Phase teachers at the two schools used in the study. Other aspects of reading practice, such as Shared Reading, were also not familiar to most of the teachers. These were two literacy strategies that could be used fairly easy in all contexts, whether resourced or under resourced. Materials for these approaches were either available in the environment or could be made with little cost and effort. The Foundation Phase teachers observed and interviewed did not seem to fully grasp the opportunities provided by these and other strategies presented in CAPS. Although Shared Reading was emphasised in training for curriculum implementation, teachers did not seem to understand possibilities arising from the use of Shared Reading such as modelling fluent reading and using the text to develop vocabulary, comprehension, decoding skills, understanding of text structure, grammar and punctuation (DoE 2011:13). There was no evidence that teachers understood that Shared Reading could be used to pave the way for supported writing activities such as Shared Writing (ibid.).

Although many good literacy strategies and activities were provided in the curriculum guidelines and presented in training workshops, there seemed to be limited take up in the classes visited.

5.2 OBSERVATIONS

5.2.1 Sivuyisiwe
Grade 1
The school was well fenced but the condition of the classes was not good at all in terms of supporting learning. Floors were dusty and windows were broken. There was no proper air ventilation for learners to get fresh air. The classrooms were also cold. In the Grade 1 class there were some charts and posters with material linked to literacy and numeracy. The blackboard was lined for writing and used as a primary teaching aid. Learners were in groups. The class had 90 learners on my first visit. It was grade 1 and 2 in one class. The class was packed full of learners. As a result the teacher could not move up and down in the class between learners. There were some discipline problems and learners were not easy to control.

The teacher was using different methods of teaching. Learners were responding in different ways to the lesson. The teacher based her lesson on a story read in the class. She used various teaching aids including the blackboard, a chart, flash cards with words and a poster. Learners were reading after the teacher. Within the class there were weaker learners who were struggling to do as required. Class mates were trying to help them. I noticed that the teacher had little time for those learners. Struggling learners were grouped together in one table. Learners were given a written task. Many took a long time to finish. Others did not finish their work in the available time. On my second visit there was an improvement. The class had been divided and the Grade 2s were no longer with the Grade 1 learners. This seemed to help the teacher to focus on her learners in more detail. Learners were responding better than the first time. They were able to form words and their writing had improved. A more manageable class size and more exposure to literacy appeared to be the contributing factors to the general improvement that was evident.

Grade 3

There were charts on the walls with words, number names and other subject matter linked to the Grade 3 curriculum. Learners were in groups. They had insufficient reading books and as a result they read in pairs. There was enough space for the teacher to walk around and engage with learners.

In this Grade, I observed that it was a continuation of what was taking place in Grade 1. A text was the departure point for literacy work. The teacher was reminding learners of the consonants and other phonics sounds that they had learnt. They did activities to consolidate learning of particular phonics. She did a lot of reading and asked questions based on the story they were reading. In both their reading and writing the teacher was very strict in terms of correct responses. She paid specific attention to punctuation, in particular the use of commas and full stops. The teacher demonstrated the skill of writing and the required letter formation on the board. Learners were reading in groups and there was also an individual reading opportunity. As in the Grade 1 class, there were learners who could not read and do the writing tasks. They appeared lost and overwhelmed. When the teacher was asking questions, they could not answer. Some learners cried when they were asked to

answer questions. Little specific assistance appeared to be provided for learners who were struggling. This was the pattern each time I visited the class. Learners who were not coping were usually left to their own devices.

Grade 6

The class was overcrowded with 69 learners and limited space. The school was using a ten day cycle with a period of 40 minutes. Individual attention did not seem possible because of the size of the class. There was not much attention to the writing skills of learners, both in terms of what and how they wrote. The teacher could not easily move up and down in the class attending groups with problems. During the reading time learners were reading in groups. Some who could not read tried to imitate the good readers by watching their mouths and listening to what they were reading. The teacher was frustrated and was not pleased because he could not help his learners as he would have liked to do. There was also a shortage of reading books and textbooks and learners were sharing books. He found the large class size problematic as it was not conducive to good teaching and learning. Return visits to the class showed little improvement. The teacher-learner ratio did not improve and resources continued to be a particular challenge.

5.2.2 Siyabonga

Grade 1

The condition of the school was good. It was well fenced and there were security guards at the gates. The class was comfortable and well ventilated. The class had 40 learners and all were in full uniform. On the walls there were charts and posters with curriculum relevant content evident. Learners had reading and workbooks on their tables. The teacher was using various teaching methods. She started her lesson with an exercise where she sang a song. Learners were listening to the song. Then they sang with the teacher. After that the teacher took out some flash cards with words. She read those words and learners read after her. She asked them to think about other words with the same initial sound. Learners came up with suitable words and the teacher wrote them on the board. The teacher asked them to form sentences out of these words. It was an interesting activity and the children were actively and enthusiastically involved. After that the teacher asked them to take their work books where they completed an activity which required them to fill in the missing words.

Learners were following the teachers' instructions. On occasions there were some learners who did not grasp immediately. They needed more time and attention. When the teacher was asking questions, sometimes she had to use code switching because learners could not understand. The teacher used a range of strategies to help learners when they struggled. Subsequent visits showed a similar pattern of a variety of literacy activities being covered by the class. Sometimes there was direct teaching and sometimes learners worked independently. The teacher appeared to be aware of the needs of her learners and made some effort to address these needs by providing additional assistance.

Grade 3

There were some charts on the walls. There were sufficient textbooks and each had their own book. They had access to dictionaries kept in the school cupboards. The class had enough space and learners were all in full school uniform. The learners were seated in groups of six. The teacher was able to move freely in between the groups.

I noticed that the teacher was using the same teaching methods that were used at Sivuyisiwe. The difference was the language of instruction. Learners in this school were using English in their classes and sometimes when they talked to their friends. The language of teaching and learning was English. However it was not always easy for learners to follow. Although many had basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) in English, their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) was not adequate (Cummins, 2008). The teacher had to try to help learners understand. For instance, she made use of gestures and actions at times, or showed them a picture.

I observed that the teacher was making use of what the learners learnt from the previous grades. She built on their prior knowledge. Reading was a key aspect of the literacy activities in the lesson. Not all learners were reading at an appropriate pace. Some were struggling and could not make meaning of the text. Other learners were showing lack of interest and were playing with their pencils and writing on their desks. There was a remedial teacher to assist struggling learners. Unfortunately she couldn't attend all learners because of time and

the number of learners in need. The teacher did not appear to assist learners in her class who were struggling. Instead she preferred referring them to the remedial teacher.

The teacher gave learners written exercise based on a text that was read to the class. They had to identify certain parts of speech. They were using cursive writing. They were told to use full stops and commas when they were writing sentences. They appeared to be a promising class. Subsequent visits to the class revealed a similar approach with regard to learners who were struggling. The teacher did not seem to take responsibility for these learners and saw this as the responsibility of the remedial teacher.

Grade 6

Grade six was not an easy class in both schools. The walls had little or no relevant charts or posters. All learners in the class had exercise books, reading books and textbooks. There were learners who were doing well but it was not easy for all learners to respond to the questions after reading. As in Grade 3, there was a significant challenge in terms of cognitive academic language proficiency in English. Some learners would ask questions for clarification or respond in ways that showed that they did not understand adequately. The class had a reasonable number of learners as there were a total of 34 in total. However, learners were not doing as expected. In most instances it seemed that their lack of progress was due more to the language barrier than to their general aptitude. They needed the teacher to code switch at times to understand what was said. Subsequent visits again produced evidence of the challenges experience by learners. They were expected to deal with a large amount of text in English. Many learners had not progressed much beyond BICS in English, yet to do well in Grade 6 at Siyabonga CALP in English was a necessity (Cummins, 2008).

Based on my observations, teachers in all grades visited were focussed on the role of text decoder (How do I crack this code?). In some instances there was an emphasis on meaning making, where questions encouraged learners to think creatively and use their experience and insight. Here the role of text participant (What does this mean to me?) was evident. The remaining two roles identified by Freebody and Luke (1990) of text user (What do I do with this text?) and text analyst (What does this text do to me?) were not evident.

5.3 INTERVIEWS

During the interviews with the teachers they cited many factors which contributed to the challenges related to literacy teaching and learning. I used unstructured interviews where I was talking face-to-face with my participants. The interviews were individual interviews. A general question was used as a starting point to elicit information about their teaching and the teaching context: What are the strategies you currently use to teach reading?

In order to prompt respondents and access further detail, I asked my participants some additional questions to get deeper insight regarding the problem of inadequate reading levels. The questions were oral and I wrote down the responses I got from them. The examples of questions I used were as follows:

- Can you tell me more about your teaching experience in the Foundation or Intermediate phase?
- Are there any problems that you experience in your teaching in this phase?
- How do you deal with such problems?
- How do you teach literacy and how do learners respond?
- How do you feel about the new curriculum? Do you anticipate any change in your teaching of reading?
- Does the environment affect your teaching?
- What is the contribution of parents in their learner's education?

In the section below I will be discussing the key problems identified by teachers during interviews in both schools. Teachers seemed problem focussed. Little response was forthcoming about how they taught reading or how they planned to change their teaching in line with CAPS. Despite prompt questions, responses turned regularly to difficulties in teaching reading. Since "problems" were the strongest message that emerged in interviews, I must report on this specifically out of respect to my respondents.

5.4 PROBLEMS CITED BY TEACHERS DURING INTERVIEWS

Teachers pointed out some of the key issues which they said contributed to the low reading levels of learners in their schools.

5.4.1 Parental involvement

Regarding the view that education in South Africa is in a crisis, it seems that the teachers blame the Department of Education, the department blames the teachers, and learners blame the teachers and teachers blame parents. Education of a child can be thought of as a three legged process, which involves a teacher, parents, or caregivers, and the learner. Parents are also an important resource for improving language and literacy of their children. Unfortunately most parents did not appear to involve themselves adequately in their children's education. This has serious implications for literacy learning. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2011) results confirmed that parents who have a positive attitude to reading have a strong influence on the reading success of their children (Howie, Van Staden, Tshele, Dowse and Zimmermann, 2012).

In an interview a Grade 1 teacher from Sivuyisiwe said, "If we call parents to school, they do not come unless it is for their needs, like they want the teachers to fill in forms for a social grant. It is not easy for the teachers to make a good progress with the learners and when they fail the class, it is when the parent will come to school, fighting with the teachers". Luke and Elley (in Pretorius and Machet, 2003:46) assert "Both home and the school literacy environment influence and affect children's acquisition and development of reading literacy".

The teacher also indicated that many learners were living with their grandparents because their biological parents were still at school, or are still teenagers. Other learner's parents were absent because of work commitments. Most of the learners in her class were living with uneducated caregivers who were unable to assist the learners adequately. A study by The Nelson Mandela Foundation found that the level of education among adults in rural areas is low. Thus no one in the learner's household might be "sufficiently educated to help with homework" and further support (NMF, 2005:29). This lack of support can lead to discontinuity in the child's education, as there is little practice in what is taught at school.

The teacher said that the situation contributed to the high failure rate of their learners. Vally in Janks 2011 indicated that "Poor learners' literacy achievement confirmed by the Annual National Assessment, must be understood partly with reference to South Africa's high adult illiteracy rates".

Grade 6 teachers at both schools, Siyabonga and Sivuyisiwe emphasised a particular problem, that of drug abuse at home especially by parents. The teachers felt that the children end up imitating what they saw happening at home, both related to misuse of drugs and other inappropriate practices. The teacher from Sivuyisiwe said, "Immorality is increasing at schools, learners want to practice sex with other learners because as they are living in small houses with their parents, drinking parents involve themselves in sex in front of them, and learners want to practice what they saw from adults". At Siyabonga the teacher reported that one Grade 6 learner was caught in a classroom after school engaging in sexual activity with a small child.

The Sivuyisiwe Grade 6 teacher discussed the behaviour of learners under the influence of various substances. Learners tend to lose concentration, laughing unnecessarily in the class whilst the teacher is teaching, because they are high. The teacher maintained that, that was a problem which needed intervention of the department itself. Other learners ended up using those drugs that were used by parents. Sometimes they were left alone and they use the left overs of alcohol and cigarettes. At Sivuyisiwe the Grade 6 teacher said "Sometimes they come to school drunk and teachers are at a risk of teaching those learners". That teacher showed me an example of a trouser of a learner who was attempting to rape another learner and he left his trouser when the teacher saw him. "How could such learners cope with learning?" He said that they needed adult intervention to support both the victims and initiators of sexual activity.

5.4.2 Teacher's attitudes

The Grade 3 teacher at Sivuyisiwe said, "As teachers are encountering a number of problems and lack of support on their side by the government, they developed negative attitude towards their work and frustration which affected their career. They are no longer enthusiastic about their career". She said that, that attitude led to unnecessary anger which

ultimately led to impatience and abusive behaviour towards learners which also affected teaching and learning. They ended up calling learners names and pass sarcastic remarks. They were punishing learners in an unreasonable manner, by humiliating slow learners in front of the class.

Some of the teachers had become despondent. They felt that the learners were not making progress. They also were of the opinion that retaining these learners would not help. The Grade 6 Siyabonga teacher and Grade 3 Sivuyisiwe teacher said that some learners become violent. They showed aggressive behaviour because of their frustration, intimidated and overwhelmed by the situations they experienced. The Siyabonga Grade 6 teacher said that learners had a feeling that it was already too late, their age did not allow them to be in those grades. Callan and Clark (1982:117) said "If pupils become disgusted with boredom and confinement of school and associate learning with pain and repulsiveness, injury done to their attitude towards education may be irreparable even in the secondary school". A negative attitude on the part of learners impacts on the attitude of the teachers. Teachers emphasised the impact of negative teacher attitude as contributing to the general problematic situation at school.

The Grade 6 Siyabonga teacher said that "Teacher's attitude changes the atmosphere of the classroom. It can be tense or free and it determines success or failure of the lesson or learning. Pupils who always lack in their work, having poor performance, felt physically, mentally confused and uncomfortable, that leads to insecurity in the classroom". Affected learners develop a feeling of self- doubt and embarrassment in that particular subject or task. The same teacher said that, "If learners are ridiculed in the class, they lose hope and decide to leave school". The Sivuyisiwe, Grade 1 teacher said in her grade 1 class, one learner was unable to read and other learners laughed at that child and the child cried. She went out and told her mother, and the mother told the learner not to go to school again. The teacher tried to do a follow up but unfortunately the parent was very angry and could not understand at that time and wanted to know how a teacher could embarrass her child like that. The parent kept her child at home. After a week she decided to send her back to school and the teacher tried to talk to the class about what they did, trying to ease tensions in that class.

In both schools, teachers said that for learners to learn, they must feel comfortable. It is supposed to be the teacher's duty to create such environment. Unfortunately teachers are having their own issues which involve salary dissatisfactions, criticism and lack of training for the developments in the new curriculum. Teachers were often criticised by the government and the parents when the results are not good and that created a negative attitude.

5.4.3 Medium of instruction

The Grade 6 teacher at Sivuyisiwe said that medium of instruction is a major problem in schools, starting from the teachers, especially in rural schools. Their learners were coming from different backgrounds with different language styles. When they start schooling they are forced and bound to use English as the medium of instruction which is not their mother tongue language. They are struggling with language and at the end it affects their learning. He said that other learners did not get any assistance from home and it seems difficult for them to use the new language. It becomes worse with the teachers trying to divert from the school rule and use their home language, isiXhosa whereas they are supposed to use English. Learners are confused and lack a sound knowledge of language rules and vocabulary. The content subjects are assessed in written texts and are supposed to be taught in English, but some teachers do not use English. Their learners are not able to express themselves easily during exams because they use isiXhosa mostly but have to learn and write in English. Some are from illiterate homes where English is not used at all.

5.4.4 Multi-grade teaching

At Sivuyisiwe the Grade 1 teacher was experiencing a problem of teaching two grades in one class (Grade 1 and 2), because of the shortage of classrooms and staff. There were only four teachers in that school and they were expected to do all the work. When they teach they have to leave the other class with a piece of work whilst the teacher is attending to another class. It was not a pleasant situation because the class was full and other learners were not doing as they were told, they took that chance and played instead of working. There was no time to attend to the slow or struggling learners. At the end of the year these learners would be promoted to the next grade, sometimes unable to read and write adequately.

5.4.5 Abused learners

The teachers said many learners are victims of rape, physical, sexual and emotional abuse. This problem was evident at Sivuyisiwe primary where a Grade 6 learner was made pregnant by her uncle. The biological parents of the child died when she was in Grade R. The Grade 6 teacher said that the child was left with her uncle, and uncle was drinking alcohol. When he became drunk, he would demand sex of the child. The child did not report this to the class teacher. This started when the child was doing Grade 3 and she was so withdrawn and she was isolating herself from others. When the teacher asked the uncle to visit school, he did not pitch up. The learner was getting a foster care grant, but the child was reportedly untidy and did not have school books and uniform. It seemed that the child was not benefitting from the grant and that it was being used for other purposes.

5.4.6 Insecurity

Learners feel insecure at school especially in rural areas where there is a lot of crime. Schools are being vandalised. Sivuyisiwe was one of the schools with such a problem. That school had adequate fencing, but windows were broken and the walls were falling apart. They were using hardboard to close the windows to protect children from cold weather. They had irreparable cracks in some walls and unlockable doors. The Grade 1 teacher said that the school grounds might be secured, but people could jump over the fence and do whatever they wanted. As a result the school principal told me that they had one computer and a photocopier, but they keep these resources in the principal's house for security reasons. Feeling safe is a basic need. Lack of security thus impacts significantly on the learners' ability to learn and make progress and the teachers' ability to teach.

5.4.7 Absenteeism

Learners in both schools mostly absent themselves from school without any tangible reasons. The teachers said that some learners absent themselves on their grandparent's pension pay days to assist them in buying groceries. Sometimes learners would be asked by their parents, especially at month end, to assist in the family business and not attend school. Other learners just lose interest in attending school. Teachers said they do not wait for them, they continue with their lessons, and those who absent themselves miss lessons

and often fall behind academically. Some learners already struggle with their studies and absenteeism makes the situation worse. This is a serious problem at Sivuyisiwe.

At Sivuyisiwe Grade 3 and 6 teachers said that some of the learners are heading their families, because these learners had been left by parents or parents passed away. They need foster parents who will take care of them. They had no one to assist them in doing their homework, as a result they just absent themselves or leave school before passing grade 12.

Absenteeism was also a problem with regard to teachers. They absent themselves for various reasons.   The Sivuyisiwe teachers cited amongst other things, lack of confidence to teach as per the requirements of the curriculum. Some teachers get sick and as a result they would are given long leave, often for a month or more without a substitute.

5.4.8 Time allocation for reading and writing

According to the Government Gazette of 2008, the formal school day for teachers is seven hours, plus additional one and a half hours for preparation and marking time per day. The teachers at both schools acknowledged the advantage of having that extra hour and a half a day because it provided a chance for them to prepare for the next day. While the teacher time seemed adequate, learner time was not regarded as sufficient. For Foundation Phase Grade R – 2 time allocation for literacy is 1 hour and 50 minutes per day and 2 hours for Grade 3. All the teachers were in agreement that and were saying it was not enough because of the demands of the curriculum.

In Grade 6 teachers reported that time changes and the period system is disadvantage to learners at this stage of their schooling. They are still young but are overloaded with subjects and have different teachers. Therefore they struggle to adapt to the requirements of all their teachers of these different subjects. By the time they start to adjust to the particular requirements of the subject, the period ends and move on to the next subject.

The Grade 3 and 6 teachers indicated that currently they are confronted with challenges regarding external examination (ANA) in grade 3 and 6. They are supposed to be invigilated by a teacher who is not teaching that class. This confuses the learners because they are still young and cannot deal easily with adults who are not familiar to them. This could impact on the ANA results as the invigilator has to supply specific instructions that the learners are expected to understand and follow.

5.4.9 Political issues within the Department and in schools

In both schools, Grade 6 teachers made reference to how the political situation impacts on schools. One of the teachers said, "We are now in a democratic country where freedom of speech and affiliation was granted to everyone. South African education mostly is affected by politics. South African teachers are highly unionised. More than 80% of teachers in public schools belong to unions and the vast majority of these to the South African Democratic Teacher's Union (SADTU)". They said that people these days tend to use unions as their stepping stones to get higher posts and forget about the future of the learners. Teachers sometimes attend meetings during school hours, leaving learners behind without a teacher. Previously it was not a common practice to hear about striking teachers. For example, teachers cited the 2007 teacher's strike, where they left classrooms for more than three weeks, for a salary increment. It was towards examination time, when Grade 12 learners were going to write their trial examinations. It was just a very painful period but teachers had no choice but to do what is in the interest of their union. At Siyabonga they mentioned the strike of 2010, where learners had to teach themselves because teachers were not there to help them. Again it impacted hard on Grade 12 Learners as well as learners in other grades. Even those who were willing to help were threatened by striking teachers. Learners lost focus and time wasted was not made up.

5.5 USE OF AVAILABLE ASSETS

Despite all the negative reports of the teachers that were interviewed, there could be a positive move that could counter the situation. A way of moving from a deficit, problem based perspective is to consider available assets. Deficit thinking is pervasive. Comber and Kamler (2004) indicated that, "Generations of teachers have been inducted into counter-

productive discourses that constitute certain students as "deficit" – the poor, the wilful, the disabled, the non-English speaking, the slow, and the bottom 10%".

I returned to my participating schools to investigate assets that could be of help in strengthening teaching and learning in schools. My orientation was framed by thinking linked to Asset-based Community Development (Ennis and West, 2010; Mathie and Cunningham, 2011; Snow, 2011). The effective use of assets could counteract to some degree the negative results in schools. Use of assets could instil an improved culture of teaching and learning. Learners and teachers could re-orientate themselves to see opportunities provided by individuals and organisations in the school and general community. These assets could improve learning in general.

As my focus was in rural context, there were assets in and around the school which could be used to help learners learn. I noticed that both schools have some classrooms with print rich walls, word cards and some books. The teachers highlighted other assets that were available to them and how did they use them to help both teachers and learners at their schools for teaching and learning.

The following is an Asset Map of current and potential assets. In the description that follows, the assets emphasised by teachers will be discussed.

Asset Mapping: Literacy Learning in Fort Beaufort District

Key Questions:

- What are the assets that exist in our community that promote learning?
- What are the assets that promote literacy learning specifically?
- Are there other assets we could use to promote literacy learning?

Individuals

Name	Brief Description	Contact Details	Paid / Voluntary staff	Resources	Current / Potential Asset
Learners	Older learners assist younger learners with school work	Sivuyisiwe and Siyabonga schools	Voluntary	Skills, talents and experience of learners	Current
Learners	Learners take turns to look after the vegetable garden	Sivuyisiwe	Voluntary	Skills, talents and experience of learners	Current
Learners	Learners assist with fund raising. At break times learners run the tuck shop.	Siyabonga	Voluntary	Entrepreneurial skills	Current
Learners	Learners hold talent shows at schools	Siyabonga	Voluntary	Talents of learners	Current
Parents of learners	Parents assist in general activities linked to the school: - Cleaning, cooking, gardening, helping teachers with sports activities Parents assist in literacy specific activities: - storytelling	Sivuyisiwe and Siyabonga schools	Voluntary	Skills, talents and experiences of parents	Current
Former Students	Assist in sport and reading.	Siyabonga	Voluntary	Talents and reading	Current
Former principal	Music classes	Siyabonga	Stipend	Experiences in music and teaching	Current

Organisation: Local

Name	Brief Description	Contact Details	Paid / Voluntary staff	Resources	Current / Potential Asset
Local Assets					
Churches	Church leaders are involved in certain school activities e.g. Grade R graduations and school prayers	Local South Africa Council of Churches	Paid and voluntary	Spiritual support and guidance	Current
Municipality of Nkonkobe	Public Library and information centre	Nkonkobe Municipality	Paid	Learners are able to borrow books and use computers. Book Days organised	Current
Provincial Assets					
Department of Agriculture	Provides assistance with gardening projects	www.agricd.gov.com	Paid	Seeds and garden tools	Current
Department of Education	Provides training, books and other materials	Department of Education: Fort Beaufort District	Paid	Training materials	Current
Department of Social Development	Supports learners and parents in various ways	Alice Centre	Paid	Food parcels, counselling services	Current
Isibindi Community Service	Supports needy learners	NGO	Voluntary	Food parcels, Uniforms, and home visits	Current

Organisation: National

Name	Brief Description	Contact Details	Staff	Resources	
General Assets					
Cricket South Africa	Offers assistance with cricket development	www.cricket.co.za	Paid	Development programmes, identification of talented players	
Love Life	AIDS prevention, education and behaviour initiative for young people.	www.lovelife.org.za	Paid	Variety of community and outreach support programmes	
Soul City	Soul City Institute offers social and behavioural change programmes	http://www.soulcity.org.za	Paid	Schools as Nodes of Care Programme	
UNICEF	Health, education and protection initiatives for children	www.unicef.org/southafrica	Paid	Various Programmes including: 'Getting Ready for School: A child-to-child approach'	
SABC Education	Various radio and TV programmes inform and entertain learners, parents and teachers	http://www.sabceducation.com/	Paid	Audio (radio), visual (TV), digital (online games and resources)	

Literacy Specific Assets					
Biblionef	Provides books for children in all official languages, for reading pleasure and for education	http://www.bibsa@iafrica.com/	Paid	Schools are able to apply for books	
FunDza Literacy Trust	*FunDza* aims to encourage reading. They target teenagers and young adults.	http://www.fundza.co.za/	Paid	Books: accessible and interesting content, Mobi Reading network, Support for new writers	
Nal'ibali	*Nal'ibali* focuses on developing the literacy potential of children through storytelling and reading	http://nalibali.org/	Paid and voluntary	Newspaper Supplements, Online resources, Radio – stories in all official languages	
Shine	*Shine* provides language and literacy support for Grades 2 and 3 children. This is a school based programme.	http://www.theshinecentre.org.za/	Paid and voluntary	Training and materials provided	
Wordworks	The literacy work of *Wordworks* is focussed on supporting and improving early language and	http://www.wordworks.org.za/	Training of parents, teachers, community volunteers and home visitors	Report: *Narrowing the Literacy Gap: Strengthening language and literacy*	

	literacy competences.				Resources: multilingual literacy materials	
Phelophepha health train	Donated books and counselling	www.thorsonelement.com		Train learners in study skills and how to manage stress	Books	
Inkwenkwezi Trust	Support learning and offer finances for further studies	UFH		Saturday classes for revision and study skills.	Study guides and finances	

Businesses

Name	Brief Description	Contact Details	Paid / Voluntary staff	Resources	Current / Potential Asset
Khetha	Stakeholder – donated books	www.gostudy.co.za	voluntary	Books	Current
Vodacom	MXit : Support for learning in all school subjects	http://digitalclassroom.co.za	Paid	Matric revision, Night-before guidelines, research resources	Current
MTN	MXit: support for learning in all schools	www.businesssoftware.com	Paid	Life skills and research resources	current

The schools have the opportunity to review the information on the Asset Map and take advantage of resources available to them. This will require teachers with a sense of agency, willing to go the extra mile. Community member could also be involved in various ways. This would bring a sense of independence and shift away from the dependency mode prevalent at present.

5.6 INSIGHTS

The following tables provide a picture of the results of both schools with regard to Grade 1, 3 and 6. Levels are indicating that learners are still lagging behind in Grade 6 especially in Home Language which is not their mother tongue language. Learners are performing between 40 – 50% in their assessment. It is even worse with First Additional Language. At least 40 % of learners got 40% and others are getting lower. In Grade 3 at least they did fairly well in First additional Language as they had more level 5s in Home language and a did better in FAL because the is more or less the same percentage of levels 4, 5 and 6, but still few level 7s.

Table indicating Grade 1, 3 and 6 end of 2013 results in both schools:

SIYABONGA: ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOL

GRADE 6

HOME LANGUAGE   **FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE**

Levels	No. of learners per level	levels	No. of learners per level
1	10	1	02
2	05	2	05
3	30	3	01
4	05	4	18
5	44	5	16
6	04	6	18
7	00	7	07
Grade 3	HL	FAL	

levels	No. of learners per level	levels	No. of learners per level
1	00	1	00
2	00	2	00
3	00	3	04
4	23	4	19
5	18	5	17
6	29	6	33
7	13	7	11
Grade 1 levels	No. of learners per level	levels	No. of learners per level
1	05	1	04
2	06	2	08
3	01	3	45
4	24	4	11
5	19	5	04
6	11	6	00
7	07	7	00

The number of learners increased in 2013 in all of the three classes (they had A and B) for each class, therefore the number of learners appearing in the above table is not the same as the one I used during my interviews.

SIVUYISIWE: ISIXHOSA IS THEIR HOME LANGUAGE

HOME LANGUAGE   **FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE**

GRADE 6

LEVELS	No. of learners per level	levels	No. of learners per level
1	00	1	00
2	00	2	00
3	02	3	19

levels	No. of learners per level	levels	No. of learners per level
4	37	4	37
5	36	5	19
6	04	6	03
7	00	7	00
GRADE 3			
levels	No. of learners per level	levels	No. of learners per level
1	00	1	00
2	00	2	00
3	00	3	12
4	12	4	15
5	07	5	19
6	21	6	10
7	31	7	14
Grade 1			
levels	No. of learners per level	levels	No. of learners per level
1	00	1	00
2	00	2	00
3	00	3	41
4	58	4	39
5	14	5	17
6	27	6	06
7	06	7	04

It was evident that as learners were progressing there could be a gap along the way. Comparing Grade 3 results in Home and FAL at Sivuyisiwe, it is showing us that there is still a long way to travel. In Grade, achievement is less than 50% in both Home and FAL. The highest percentage is 46% in Grade 6. No learners got level 7 and very few level 6s. The same applied to Grade 3. There were no level 7 results in Home language and in FAL.

Nevertheless levels on the table are promising. Foundation phase learners were trying their best but because of the conditions in their schools some struggling with literacy in the African languages as well as English and Afrikaans.

Here under is a table that depicts the picture of literacy results in ANA, 2012, of the two schools. In the English medium school (Siyabonga) the problem of inadequate literacy competence become worse as learners progress. The number of learners who got level 2 and 1 in their results was increasing. Learners had no background of English as a first language but at school they were using it as Home Language and medium of instruction in all subjects. This affected their academic progress in all subjects.

In the table below the two Grade 3s were combined (Gr 3A and B) and Grade 6 at Siyabonga the other class had 34 and the other had 38.

Table 4:   Learner's literacy results

SIYABONGA	No. of Learners (Gr. 3)	Levels	. Number per Level rating	No. of Learners (Gr. 6)	Levels	No. per level	
English 1st lang.	74	4	31	72	4	5	
		3	25		3	22	
		2	10		2	12	
		1	8		1	33	
IsiXhosa 2nd lang.				72	4	3	
					3	27	
					2	23	
					1	19	
Afrikaans				72	4	10	
					3	27	
					2	20	
					1	15	

SIVUYISIWE							
IsiXhosa 1st lang.	56	4	19	66	4	1	
		3	27		3	15	
		2	7		2	15	
		1	3		1	36	
English 2nd lang.				66	4	6	
					3	16	
					2	11	
					1	33	

Looking at their performance there is a room for improvement depending on the teacher's efforts to teach literacy, and the assistance offered by other stakeholders to improve the situation. The above results are showing that there is a crisis in reading levels. Most learners got level 1. Almost 60% of learners achieved level 1 in English which their second language but is used as first language at Siyabonga. There is a great need for other strategies to improve this situation.

These results could be used for informing a plan to close the gaps in learner's literacy skills. As a start, it would be of benefit for both teachers and learners if the CAPS guidelines regarding reading were followed more closely. Schools could appeal to the district or to NGOs to assist with further training and support regarding the teaching and learning of reading. Reading improvement must start in the school classrooms with the official curriculum implementation. Then further strategies can be addressed.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 IMPROVING READING

In order for a sound reading competence to be established in South African schools, it is essential to understand the factors that hinder the development of reading proficiency and avoid or minimize them where possible. In addition, nurturing those established factors that promote skilled reading, will work well in improving teaching and learning in general, as suggested by Pretorius and Machet, (2003). Despite the many problems which limit progress in the development of reading, it is important to work towards a holistic approach to improving reading in and out of school. This development should start at the preschool stage with opportunities to engage with books, to sing songs, listen to stories and enjoy many other emergent literacy activities.

From Grade 1 onwards reading needs to be explicitly taught to learners. Then from Grade 4 knowledge and vocabulary should be expanded and learners should start to use reading as a tool for learning, Chall (1983). Reading texts should go beyond the immediate frame of reference of learners, building on knowledge which they already possess. This can be achieved if the schools can combine the strategies suggested by the DoE in the CAPS documents especially from the Foundation Phase. Use of all available assets to help learners to improve their reading skills will be of great importance.

The value attached to literacy by a community and the functions that literacy serves within that community determines to a large extent what is regarded as reading competence. I was so touched and encouraged when I saw dedicated grannies graduating from an Adult Literacy programme in Potsdam Village in the Buffalo City Municipality in the Eastern Cape. Grannies were left to care for their grandchildren. As they had limited or no literacy skills, they found it difficult to assist with homework tasks assigned to their grandchildren. They have learnt how to read and write after years of suffering the humiliation of being unable to do either. Now they can be used as resources in helping their grandchildren learn.

Enhancing literacy in the Potsdam community won't only be beneficial for the older women and their dependants, but even for the society at large.

Roberts and Wilson, (in Plumber and Rosenberg, 2006) say that reading attitude is an integral part of development and use of lifelong reading skills. It has to start with the teachers who love reading so that they can model and pass on this enjoyment of books to their learners. The teacher has to promote an active, mindful reading by means of good teaching. A positive attitude to reading is an important basis for starting the teaching of reading. Availability of textbooks and sufficient, interesting reading material are strong motivational factors to keep learners interested. Teaching time must be set aside for language and reading instruction, in particular to support the development of increasingly sophisticated reading proficiency throughout the years of schooling. Identifying literacy assets internal and external to the community is an important process. Mobilising and taking advantage of these assets is a crucial step towards improving the reading levels of learners in all communities.

6.2 POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Policy documents issued by the department stipulate the notional time for reading and writing. Mandated literacy time must be used so that reading and writing can improve. For it to work properly teachers need to plan their literacy curriculum properly. The introduction of Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is one of the policies introduced to improve the existing situation in our curriculum. It is designed to support teachers by bringing all the important information from the National Curriculum Statement into a single document. It covers all contents, planning and assessment requirements for each subject. It aims at giving expression to what is regarded to be knowledge, skills and values worth learning, (Department of Education policy statement (2011). The success of the programme of reading and writing will depend to a great extent on the training given to teachers to administer it accordingly and also proper planning for lessons. Training and subsequent support will build teacher's confidence and a positive attitude towards learners, their reading and their school work in general.

To achieve the designated outcomes in our curriculum there is a great need of monitoring the implementation of the curriculum in schools throughout the year, not only during moderation but continuous visits to schools to check progress in the curriculum and its effectiveness in developing learners' reading and writing skills. Incorporation of other strategies suggested in the literature such as the Four Resources Model of Freebody and Luke (1990, 1992), Janks (2011), and others will be of importance in improving the status quo and supplementing CAPS literacy initiatives.

6.3 ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The Minister of Basic Education has indicated that each district needs a plan for literacy and numeracy that is understood, monitored and implemented by all its schools. The ANA results will allow the department to strengthen areas of academic performance that have been highlighted in the ANA reports. The DoE should ensure intervention programmes for Foundation and Intermediate phase learners. ANA and other assessments done revealed that many of learners in these phases struggle to read and write, or even understand the text at their grade levels. The summary scores of reading of Grade 3 and 6 from Siyabonga and Sivuyisiwe, as an example, showed the percentage of struggling learners which is high.

For the literacy improvement plans and policies to be effective, teachers need to be trained specifically for literacy teaching. This could bring back the lost confidence in the teaching field. Looking at the contents of the CAPS, it brings back the hope for best education in our country. The CAPS documents suggest good ways of teaching reading at school, from the Foundation Phase up to Grade 12. Introducing teachers to the opportunities provided in the Four Resources Model of Freebody and Luke (1990) could extend the literacy proficiency of learners in primary and high schools and enable them to progress from basic decoding to more advanced, critical engagement with texts.

6.4 SITUATIONAL LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Reading takes place and is learnt within a broader social context, assert Pretorius and Machet (2003). Schools and teachers constitute an important component of this social context. The context in which literacy is taught and acquired will have an effect on the consequent levels of literacy accomplishment. Both home and school literacy environments

influence and impact on children's acquisition and development of literacy. It is evident that our learners are affected by illiteracy and limited exposure to literacy events in their homes. Unfortunately our learners are from high poverty communities and this has an influence on teaching and learning in schools. Learning in many Eastern Cape schools is characterised by inadequacy of physical resources, overcrowding, and limited supplies of learning material and books. The availability of material like textbooks, reading material in general and libraries can play a role in encouraging learners to read.

Teachers and learners are struggling with literacy in the African languages as well as in English. Limited resources in the African languages are a particular challenge. For an example on the 6th May 2011, I attended a World Book day organised by the Nkonkobe Municipality aiming at promoting reading to primary school learners. They used Grade 5 learners from different schools. There were isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans speaking groups. Learners were reading in three languages. Learners were given chances to read different books in isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans in the reading competition. It was not easy for all learners to read additional languages in addition to their mother tongue. However, the event was important in terms of awareness-raising. It challenged the municipality. They saw the need for opening libraries in communities so that learners can get the necessary exposure to different texts.

The libraries could be a source of support for all schools in the municipal area.   Municipal officials promised to organise study guides and also encouraged learners to visit their libraries so that they could teach learners how to use Internet as a resource for their learning. Local initiatives like these help to challenge a deficit and dependency orientation. Using the assets available in schools and to the community helps to develop a sense of agency and hope. Teachers need to make use of these assets so that they can make teaching and learning easier.

One way of addressing the challenge of low accountability in schools is to change the perceptions of teachers and expectations about their learner's literacy accomplishments. Teachers need to be better informed about what reading entails so that they can assess their learner's reading development more realistically. They must also be lifelong readers so

that they can get enough knowledge in their field of work. This change does not come easily. Reading campaigns will only be successful if new literacy behaviours are role modelled and teachers can perceive the benefits of adopting more meaningful literacy practices. Therefore we need to involve all the stakeholders in education and in the community so that they can work together to build the future of their children in different ways.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.5.1 The Department of Education

Before the DoE introduces a policy it must make sure that proper training is done with the people who are going to carry out the programmes within the department. Tertiary institutions should also be involved actively in the on-going support of teachers. I would suggest that English with other dominant language(s) of the province should be compulsory part of pre-service and in-service teacher support. This will bring back the lost confidence in teachers.

The DoE should monitor the distribution of the resources to schools especially those in the disadvantaged areas as they are the most struggling schools. It should not end at the distribution of resources, monitoring should be done continuously to ensure proper administration of the policies and use of the resources.

The department should also draw lines for political activities within the Department of Education. The employer must take a stand on activities that will disrupt the education of poor children.

6.5.2 School Management Teams (SMTs) and Teachers

It is the duty of the SMT to monitor teachers at schools and discuss problems together so that effective teaching and learning can take place, but they need to be capacitated so that they are clear about their roles and responsibilities in the curriculum.

Teachers should model proper behaviour and love for books, that is, they must be lifelong learners. They must also take note of the assets available at schools and use them effectively for the benefit of learners.

6.5.3 LEARNERS

The curriculum encourages learner involvement in education. Learners must not be passive in their learning. They must be made aware of the role they have to play in their own learning. They must not wait for the teacher to teach them but they must be active, and reflect on what they are doing to get to learn concepts and information. If they do so, they will not blame teachers all the time when they fail.

Continuous motivational talks with learners are needed. Teachers must try to listen to their problems and try to help them as these problems can interfere with their studies. Life Orientation teachers must try and help learners in all aspects of life to balance their life. Learners must show interest in their learning by doing whatever is necessary for them to get information. They must try to be text users at all times. Learners can be invited to participate in an asset mapping exercise so that they also take ownership for their learning. There may be existing and potential assets that learners are not aware of that they could access and use.

6.5.4 PARENTS

Parents have a duty to assist learners and teachers. Learners are given homework at school, and parents are expected to help and support their children. Parents have a right to go to school and enquire about the progress of their children. That will make a difference in the learning of a child because the child will see that she is not alone. That will also promote discipline to the learners. They will respect teachers and parents as they can see the partnership between them. They will feel secure in a way. Seeing their parents at school now and again could raise a sense of pride in learners to co-operate and do their best. Parents must not always shift the blame. They must take the responsibility of the future of their children. They must understand that they are an important resource in the lives of their children and the community in general.

6.6 CONCLUSION

Literacy is a core competency needed for academic and other success. Education officials in all levels of the system, and especially literacy and language teachers, have to raise the bar to develop learners' skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes central to realising the dreams and aspirations of individuals and communities. Support by parents and community members can bolster the in-school literacy work and extent to out-of school literacies that enrich learners' lives and prospects.

As this research text draws to a conclusion I return to the questions that guided the study:
1. What are the strategies currently used to teach reading in primary schools?
2. What innovative in-school strategies are available to improve reading levels?
3. What innovative out-of-school strategies are available to improve reading levels?

Strategies currently used in the two schools I visited regarding reading teaching are fairly limited. An emphasis on decoding and surface level reading skills was evident. Many factors impacted on effective reading teaching and learning. The particular circumstances of the Lace community were found initially to be limiting. After scratching the surface with an asset-based inquiry the strengths and potential both in and out of school surfaced.

Innovative in-school strategies include general and reading specific strategies. In particular the strengths of learners and their contributions both present and possible emerged as a beacon of hope in the asset mapping exercise. The sense of agency that was initiated by the asset-based work and the slight shifting from a dependency mind-set is an essential, if small, contribution of this research study. The Four Resources Model is a practical and innovative means of improving reading levels. This study showed that Luke and Freebody (1990) prepared a model can articulate well with the requirements of the CAPS curriculum. Using this model from the Foundation Phase, into the Intermediate Phase and then on into high school can help our learners to become critical and creative readers and thinkers.

A diverse range of out-of school strategies were also highlighted in the asset-mapping exercise. A key contribution of this study was to bring together in an Asset Map the existing and potential strategies available to a vulnerable Eastern Cape community. Once the

mapping was finalised a picture of potential emerged. Looking at the collective strengths of individuals, organisations and the community was a powerful reminder that the Lace community has the means of improving reading levels substantially using strengths already available or possible. There is no need to wait for the government to provide. Lace itself can provide much for itself.

This study has shown that with patience and the development of a range of in-school and out-of-school community strategies, the reading levels of learners can be improved. By making the most of available assets we can address low literacy levels and ensure that all learners are given equal chances to achieve their goals.

APPENDIX 1

1. LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

FORT BEAUFORT DISTRICT – HIV AND AIDS AND SOCIAL PLANNING
*CAPE COLLEGE BUILDING * Healdtown Road * Fort Beaufort * Private Bag X2041* FORT BEAUFORT * 5720 * REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA * Tel: +27 46 645 7949 Fax: 086 560 6341* Website: luphe @webmail.co.za*Date: 18 NOVEMBER 2013* Enquiries: L.E. Mazwi*

TO : THE PRINCIPALS OF ALL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

SUBJECT : PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH: MRS JN POSWA-NOLISI

DATE : 02 JUNE 2011

Permission is hereby granted to Mrs JN Nolisi to conduct research in any of the Fort Beaufort District Primary schools.

The research she is undertaking is in line with the curriculum challenges faced by schools and will assist in improving learner attainment in particular and the process of teaching, learning and assessment.

You are therefore requested to assist her as you can.

Your cooperation is always appreciated.

Yours in Education

(Acting CES: Curriculum Management and Support)

APPENDIX 2

2.1 COVERING LETTER FOR FOUNDATION AND INTERMEDIATE PHASE LITERACY TEACHERS

Dear participant

Your voluntary participation in this study is highly appreciated.

I am Julia Nomahlubi Poswa-Nolisi a Masters student at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. I am conducting research on the strategies to improve reading levels of learners in an Eastern Cape Community. The research entails conducting face-to-face interviews and observations in two primary schools in the Fort Beaufort District. My focus is in three grades, Grade 1, 3 and 6, (Foundation and Intermediate phases). You are kindly requested to answer questions as honestly as you can.

With your permission, the interview will be recorded, and the data will be disposed on completion of the study. I would also request your permission to observe the lesson, by prior arrangements, on dates and times suitable to you.

You and all the other participants in the study will remain anonymous, and any sensitive information you provide during the interview will be kept confidential.

I can be contacted on 0835337667 (cellphone) or 040 6531914 (telefax)

Thank you

Julia N Poswa-Nolisi

2.2 CONSENT AGREEMENT

Name of Researcher   : Julia Nomahlubi Poswa-Nolisi

Institution   : Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Degree   : Masters in Education

Research Topic   : Investigating strategies to improve reading levels of learners

                                           in an Eastern Cape Community

The purpose and conditions of participation have been fully explained to me. I understand what my involvement entails and I am aware that my participation is voluntary and freely given. I have read the agreement, and am aware that I can terminate engagement in the interview at any point without penalty.

Thank you

Signature of volunteer respondent ………………………………. Date ……………………………..

Signature of Researcher …………………………………. Date …………………………………………

Contact details: 0835337667

APPENDIX 3

Observation Analysis

	School 1: Grade 1
	Date : 06/06/2011 and 11/08/2011
	Time : 10H00
Observation Items	
Chalkboard	Was lined. Had a list of words with letter sounds **FR.**
Posters and materials on walls	Literacy and numeracy posters. Charts with phonics (single and double). Flash cards with different words. Pictures and a calendar.
Teacher materials	Textbook, box with cards. Teacher guide
Learner materials	Workbooks and exercise books, pencil and colouring pencils. Colouring books, scissors.
Physical Space'	The room had space but not big enough. The classes had air ventilators. There were (40) learners in that class. The floor was covered with tiles.
Learning Space"	Little space but learners used the available space effectively.
Arrangement of desks	Arranged in groups
Teacher approach	Telling stories to learners, asking questions, giving activities, explaining and demonstrating.
Learner response	Talking, answering questions, reading after the teacher and writing.
Teacher approach	Reading stories, asking questions and giving activities
Learner response	Writing, answering questions and reading individually and in groups.
General notes • Duration of observation 45 min. • Classroom atmosphere conducive • Teacher / learner interaction teacher was talking freely and monitoring	

group work visiting each table.

- Learner / learner interaction   able to work together, sharing books.
- Teacher planning   well planned lessons and activities
- Language usage   teacher was using English and learners
                                                         were also responding in the same language
                                                whereas it was not easy for learners as it
                                                was not their mother tongue language.
- Resource usage   teacher was able to link the lesson with
                                                the resources at hand, eg, words on the
                                                board and flash cards.
- Other   Learners were given a chance to formulate
                                                their own words. (oral activity).

	School 2 : Grade 1
	Date : 15/06/2011 and 14/08/2011
	Time : 11 h 00
Observation Items	
Chalkboard	Lined with words written. Different colours were used to highlight letter sounds.
Posters and materials on walls	charts, flash cards, literacy and numeracy posters, pictures
Teacher material	Textbook, teacher guide, charts, pictures, storybooks, flash cards.
Learner materials	Workbooks, exercise books, colouring books, crayons, pencil, rubber and scissors.
Physical Space	Was not big enough, classroom had rough and dusty floor, not enough space for the teacher to put other material. The classroom has broken windows, doors had no locks as a

	result they are cold. Secured fencing
Learning Space	Not enough at all, overcrowded and not conducive for learning and teaching. Two classes in one class (90) on my first visit but for the second time things were better as the class was separated (45).
Arrangement of desks	Group sitting
Teacher approach	Telling stories, giving learners activities. Reading words in the flash cards. Asking questions.
Learner response	Writing and reading after the teacher, using workbooks,
Teacher approach	Marking individuals as they do their work in their workbooks.
Learner response	Finishing their classwork

General notes

- Duration of observation   45 min.
- Classroom atmosphere   not conducive
- Teacher / learner interaction   teacher was struggling to get
  learner attention. Noisy class
- Learner / learner interaction   Positive
- Teacher planning   Well planned and relevant
- Language usage   Mostly using isiXhosa as learner
  do not understand English.
- Resource usage   Used effectively
- Other   Was using flash cards and explain
  words appearing in the stories
  read by the teacher.

	School 1 : Grade 3
	Date : 06/06/2011 and 11/08/2011
	Time : 11H00
Observation Items	
Chalkboard	Was clean but lined.
Posters and materials on walls	Few posters and charts
Teacher materials	Teacher guide, story books, flash cards
Learner materials	Exercise books, pencils, crayons
Physical Space	The class had enough air ventilation. School had playgrounds for learners. Classrooms had reasonable number, (34) learners. Secured classrooms.
Learning Space	They have a space for the teacher to move in between the rows and able to write on the board.
Arrangement of desks	In groups
Teacher approach	Reading stories, demonstrations, taking some difficult words and explaining for learners. Asking learners to read some pieces of work prepared by the teacher.
Learner response	Reading and answering, responding to the teacher instructions.
Teacher approach	Giving learners work and mark it
Learner response	Doing their classwork

General notes

- Duration of observation   50 min.
- Classroom atmosphere   Conducive for learning
- Teacher / learner interaction   Healthy and positive
- Learner / learner interaction   Positive
- Teacher planning   well planned lesson with activities
- Language usage   Using English only

• Resource usage	Well used, and relevant to the lesson presented.
• Other	Good lesson

	School 2 : Grade 3
	Date : 15/06/2011 and 14/08/2011
	Time : 11H00
Observation Items	
Chalkboard	Clean but lined
Posters and materials on walls	Few posters.
Teacher materials	Textbook, teacher's guide class register, pictures, story book
Learner materials	Exercise books, pencils,
Physical Space	They had a reasonable number of learners (40). Was not good enough for learning as other windows were broken with cemented floor. Walls need to be renovated. Not healthy.
Learning Space	Not enough but the teacher can move in between the groups.
Arrangement of desks	Groups
Teacher approach	Telling learners what to do, reading stories, asking questions. Explaining, and demonstrating.
Learner response	Answering orally, reading after the teacher, group reading, writing in their exercise books.
Teacher approach	Giving homework related to the lesson.
Learner response	Individual reading
General notes	

- Duration of observation   45 min.
- Classroom atmosphere   need attention
- Teacher / learner interaction   understanding
- Learner / learner interaction   able to express themselves to others
- Teacher planning   well planned lesson
- Language usage   used medium of instruction.

    IsiXhosa was their first language

    Other learners were struggling

       especially when the teacher is using

    English, she had to code switch.

- Resource usage   Used effectively and fitted well with

    the lesson.

- Other   They didn't perform as expected

       in ANA.

	School 1: Grade 6
	Date : 21/06/2011 and 02/09/2011
	Time : 11H00
Observation Items	
Chalkboard	Was clean and big enough for everyone to see.
Posters and materials on walls	Nothing on the walls
Teacher materials	Textbooks, teacher guide, reading books, magazines
Learner materials	Exercise books learner's guide and reading books.
Physical Space	They were using a prefab for grade 6 class. They had a shortage of classes. The space in the prefab was enough but hot in summer

	and cold in winter.
Learning Space	Enough but a little bit irritating during hot or cold days as learners feel uncomfortable in this classroom.
Arrangement of desks	Arranged in rows. Learners were using single desks and chairs.
Teacher approach	Telling, demonstrating, explaining, asking questions.
Learner response	Answering questions, reading articles, writing, reading in groups and individually.
Teacher approach	Giving homework and other activities
Learner response	Positive

General notes

- Duration of observation   45 min
- Classroom atmosphere   little bit disturbing
- Teacher / learner interaction   positive
- Learner / learner interaction   able to help each other
- Teacher planning   well planned lesson
- Language usage   using language well but others were still struggling to express themselves
- Resource usage   not much of the resources, but teacher was able to use the few available ones
- Other   computer was also used for other activities.

	School 2 : Grade 6
	Date : 20/06/2011 and 05/09/2011
	Time : 11H00
Observation Items	
Chalkboard	Average sized

Posters and materials on walls	A map and one LO chart
Teacher materials	Textbooks, teacher guides, reading books
Learner materials	Learner guides, exercise books
Physical Space	Not enough, class full of desks and learners, floors were covered by vinyl tiles, condition was good.
Learning Space	Not enough. Learners were sharing desks. No space for the teacher to sit or walk around. The class had 69 learners.
Arrangement of desks	In groups
Teacher approach	Telling stories, reading, explaining, and allow group discussions.
Learner response	Discussing, sharing books for reading, answering questions.
Teacher approach	Asking questions after reading, giving activities.
Learner response	Writing.

General notes

- Duration of observation   45 min.
- Classroom atmosphere   not pleasing
- Teacher / learner interaction   sometimes do not respond as expected.
- Learner / learner interaction   positive, sharing
- Teacher planning   well planned lessons
- Language usage   struggling to use second language
  There were learners who are doing well.
- Resource usage   the few available resources were used effectively.
- Other   mostly using group activities

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