



University of
Zululand

**TEACHING OF LITERACY COMPETENCIES TO LEARNERS IN OVERCROWDED
CLASSROOMS IN THE MAMAILA CIRCUIT, MOPANI DISTRICT.**

BY

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS
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Declaration

I, Matshipi Molimisi Gilbert, (201759998) hereby that this study is my original work and has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university. I further declare that all the resources that were consulted when conducting my study *on teaching of literacy competencies to learners overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila circuit, Mopani district* are included and duly acknowledged in the reference list.

Signature.....**Date**.....

Matshipi M.G

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Dedication

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate the teaching strategies being used by teachers teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms of Mamaila Circuit primary schools. The study followed a qualitative approach. The design was a case study. The literacy competences were in the home language Sepedi and first additional language English. The grades covered by the study were grade 4 and grade 6. At grade 4 the learners enter the Intermediate Phase after they finish the Foundation Phase at grade 3. At grade 6 the learners exit the Intermediate Phase. The sample comprising 12 teachers was drawn from three primary schools. In-depth interviews were conducted using an interview guide whose questions were formulated from the research questions. Data were analysed thematically. The least overcrowded classroom in the sample had 51 learners and the most overcrowded classroom had 139 learners out of a recommended 1:40 teacher to pupil ratio for primary schools. One of the findings was that the most common teaching strategy amongst others was that of grouping learners according to mixed abilities and appointing group leaders from amongst the learners adjudged to be more capable in terms of reading skills. There were learners with learning barriers who did not benefit from any of the strategies in place. These learners were disadvantaged as there were no education psychologists at school, circuit and district education offices to attend to their needs. These learners were kept in the conventional schools for lack of special schools that could cater for them. The study has recommended on teaching strategies that the grouping method must have rotational group leadership so that the initially most 'capable' learners do not feel entitled to leading other learners. The most common method for assessing the effectiveness of the mixed ability grouping strategy was to keep numbers of learners who at beginning of the each term had reading and writing challenges. The teachers claim that the numbers of poorly literate learners decreased from first to fourth term of the year. While the teachers found the grouping method effective the study warned the over-reliance by teachers on shedding off their responsibilities to group leaders could be interpreted as abusing the learners. The study made suggestions for further studies at the end of the report.

Key words: Overcrowded classroom, teaching literacy

Acronyms

ANA	: Annual National Assessment
DOE	: Department of Education
DI	: Differentiated Instruction
EGRA	: Early Grade Reading Assessment
FFLC	: Foundation for Learning Campaign
INLNS	: Integrated National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
LAIP	: Learner Attainment Improvement Programme
LTSM	: Learner Teachers Support Materials
MLA	: Monitoring Learning Achievement
NRS	: National Reading Strategy
SACMEQ	: Southern and East Africa Consortium for Education Quality
SAMOE	: South African Ministry of Education.
SES	: Socio-Economic School
SGB	: School Governing Body
PIRLS	: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PPT	: Pupil Teacher Ratio
QIDS-UP	: Quality Improvement Development Support and Upliftment Programme
UNESCO	: United Nation Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

In 1994 the Ministry of Education in South Africa inherited a fragmented and racially divided education system founded on the policies of apartheid, opened learning opportunities to all races (South African Ministry of Education (SAMOE, 2005). The democratic dispensation has committed itself to redressing imbalances in the education system by creating an environment that is conducive for the provision of quality education to all South African citizens. However, overcrowding in classrooms has remained a challenge to most rural schools and may remain part of the system in the long-term (Marais, 2016).

A policy document on Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure published stipulated among others, the provision of safe classrooms to schools with a maximum of 40 learners per class (Department of Basic Education; 2013). Equal Education (2014) puts the recommended learner to teacher ratios in all primary schools at 40:1 and 35:1 at secondary school levels.

In the Mamaila circuit where I work as a principal, I have observed that there is very serious problem of literacy in primary schools. Mamaila circuit is in deep rural areas of the Limpopo Province. The conditions in the schools are still dominated by the effects of the apartheid system as very little has been achieved in terms of improving the living conditions of the people in the area including conditions in the schooling system. Some classrooms are taught with more than 60 learners constituting one grade. The educators teaching in these classes have reported lesson delivery difficulties and failure to keep up to date with marking class and home activities because of overcrowded classrooms. The resources have not been adequate for the large classes especially prescribed textbooks and supplementary reading materials. Learners have to share desks and chairs in some instances and this has since been affecting the learning environment. Infrastructure delivery by government in other schools has not matched the intake of learners and the demand for classrooms has been on the increase. These problems have been discussed in management meetings between

the circuit manager and primary school principals and have been reported to both the district and provincial levels. When immediate solution is not found, schools had to endure such problems. As a result, learners are continually performing poorly in literacy because they are unable to read and write.

There have been assessments done by the government nationally so as to ascertain what levels of literacy were obtaining in the education system. These assessments prompted the government to put in place some measures that were aimed at redressing the deficits in these two foundational pillars of education.

In 2001 and 2004 the national Department of Education (DoE, 2007) conducted two national systemic evaluations to establish the literacy and numeracy levels in primary schools. The findings of the evaluations revealed that 54% of grade 3 learners were not on par regarding reading competency. The surveys showed low levels of reading ability across the country. The average score for reading and writing of 52,000 grade 3 learners from 1,400 mainly urban schools was 39%. These statistics would be far worse in rural areas (DoE, 2008).

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) conducted an Annual National Assessment (ANA) in September 2012 on learners in grades 1-6 and grade 9 in Language and Mathematics. According to the Diagnostic Report (DoE, 2012), key findings were that learners could not read with comprehension, wrote words and sentences that were incoherent, and lacked the ability to make inferences from the given information in a text or to spell frequently used words correctly. The report singled that the most striking weakness was the inability of learners to read with understanding.

The inability to read and write affects their numeracy skills as well. When the learners are only able to read and write then can they only be able to decipher the jargon associated with mathematics. Literacy becomes a prerequisite to acquiring other types of skills that are availed in each subject at school. According to Lessing and Mahabeer (2007), learners who are instructed in a language different from their mother tongue, will experience problems in reading. Dixon, Place and Kholowa (2008) maintain that, in Southern Africa, many children's home and school literacy practices do not afford them access to local and global literacy practices.

The 2012 ANA qualitative analysis indicates that the Limpopo Province was the worst performing province in the country for literacy levels in grades 3, 6 and 9. This challenge compelled the Limpopo provincial department of education to incorporate intervention activities through programmes such as LAIP (Learner Attainment Improvement programme) and QIDS-UP (Quality Improvement Development Support and Upliftment Programme) in attempts to overcome the challenges and help learners improve their performance (DoE, 2013).

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) released their 2017 results on literacy in fifty countries that included South Africa. The findings show that 78 % of students in grade 4 in South Africa are unable to read for meaning. This number failed to satisfy the lowest international standard that is set by PIRLS. The students failed to find given information or to extricate information that was stated explicitly. They could not give meaning to events that were given in the text. In the USA and England the figures turned out as 4 % and 3 % respectively. The report states that there has been no tangible shift for the better in reading skills in South Africa from the year 2011.

The national findings on the levels of literacy provided an insight into what was likely to prevail even at schools involved in this study. Therefore it is of keen interest to the objectives of the study to find how teachers are using these findings to devise new strategies that can make their learners to excel in literacy activities.

Overcrowding created a situation where teachers find it difficult to teach learners effectively. This has even been observed with teaching literacy competencies to learners in overcrowded classrooms. Teachers seem to find it challenging to teach both the home language, Sepedi, and the first additional language, English in overcrowded classrooms. Reports during circuit meetings suggest that teachers are not coping in teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms. There are no workshops organised for supporting teachers with strategies they may use in teaching literacy competencies in the crowded classroom environment. Available literature reviewed on strategies for teaching literacy competencies does not include how teachers can adopt available teaching strategies in overcrowded classrooms.

1.2 Significance of study.

Overcrowded classrooms are regarded as a major challenge in Mamaila circuit. The study endeavoured to find the challenges teachers faced in fulfilling the requirements of the curriculum with reference to inadequate literacy competences. The study therefore was significant in the following aspects:

- It brought out how teachers were tackling the challenges in the classroom and to what extent they were successful.
- The findings will be disseminated at workshops and school management level within the circuit and district should enhance cross-pollination of successful strategies that improve literacy levels of learners in overcrowded classrooms.
- The findings may be valuable to the Department of Basic Education when it makes decisions on allocation of both physical and human resources.
- The study may form a basis for further research at district, provincial and national levels.
- The study has contributed to scholarship in the sense that it will remain the property of the university library whereby lecturers and students may use it as a reference. Prospective students can get advice in what the study has achieved in respective areas.
- The university may publish it online on its virtual library and it will be available for reference to consumers globally.

1.3 Problem statement

Educators are required to provide the best learning experience for learners to learn particularly in the foundation phase. However, schools in the Mamaila circuit were experiencing overcrowded classrooms, which were reported to have adverse effects on the teaching of literacy competencies thus affecting the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers handling overcrowded classrooms found it difficult to competently complete curriculum requirements regarding literacy competencies. Teachers have reported their inability to teach and complete curriculum activities in accordance with allocated notional times due to overcrowded classrooms. The numbers of learners in classes were overwhelming and delivery of lessons, which requires learning enabling

teaching strategies, is adversely affected. The teaching of literacy competencies in the primary schools in the rural Mamaila Circuit seem to be negatively affected by overcrowded classrooms. Learners are reportedly continuing to perform poorly, and teachers also reported to be finding it difficult to teach literacy competencies in the circuit. However, this has not been empirically authenticated by any study. Literature reviewed is silent on strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy competencies in classes that are overcrowded and are in rural setting.

1.4 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to investigate the teaching strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.

1.5 Research objectives

To achieve the aim of this study, the following objectives were formulated:

- To explore the teaching strategies teachers were using to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.
- To determine the effectiveness of the strategies primary teachers use in teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms.
- To investigate the possible effective strategies that teachers used in teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms.

1.6 Research questions

In order to address the research objectives, the following questions were be asked:

- What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit?
- How effective are the strategies primary teachers are using in teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?
- What are possible effective strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?

1.7 Intended contribution to the body of knowledge.

The methods that teachers use to teach literacy competences in overcrowded classrooms if successful may be incorporated into in-service teacher training workshops hosted by curriculum advisers. These may become part of the didactics knowledge that teachers may use when they teach in schools under similar circumstances. Such new knowledge may pertain to how the teachers manage space and time, motivate learners that do not have skills demanded by the grade in which they are currently engaged and how they handle possible ridicule from fellow learners who might be well skilled in reading for that grade. Being a rural circuit where learners are non-fee paying and are provided with textbooks, stationery and food such knowledge may be useful in the South African context as this type of school environment comprises the majority of schools that cater for the basic education of the previously disadvantaged black population. If the methods are being used by teachers in this research are not yielding the anticipated improvement in performance of the learners, this study may suggest strategies that can be used to teach literacy competences effectively in overcrowded classrooms.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

The study was conducted in Mamaila Circuit which comprised 17 primary schools. The researcher sampled one teacher from one primary school teaching Grade 4, and another teacher teaching Grade 6. Three schools were purposively sampled which represented comparatively extreme levels of overcrowding. Grade 4 is the receiving level when learners exit the foundation phase at Grade 3, and Grade 6 is the exit grade of the intermediate phase. These grades were appropriate to test the skills that are requisite to each learner as they entered and exited the intermediate phase.

1.9 Chapter division

The study report is comprises five chapters.

Chapter one

Chapter one is an introductory chapter for providing introduction and background information of the study. The chapter also provided the problem statement, objectives, research design and methodology.

Chapter two

The chapter discussed theoretical framework, the literature surrounding the teaching of literacy competencies in overcrowded classes.

Chapter three

The research design and methodology that was used in the study was presented in this chapter.

Chapter four

The data collected was presented, analysed and discuss in this chapter.

Chapter five

The chapter presented the summary, findings and recommendations from the study. Suggestions were proffered for future researches of the study.

1.10 Chapter summary

Chapter one introduced the study laying out the research objectives and research questions. The delimitations and limitations of the study were outlined as well. The next chapter discusses the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one gave the background to the study including the research objectives. This chapter presents the literature review on teaching strategies that teachers are using in teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms. The theory which guided this study is also discussed in this chapter.

2.2 Conceptual framework

The classroom is the most important area within a school where students spend most of their time, hopefully in an environment conducive to learning and the way the classroom is set up reflects the way in which the teacher wants to portray as his or her philosophy and priorities (Khan & Iqbal, 2012). A teacher would set up desk configuration in the classroom in a manner that they feel will not hinder the process of teaching but rather make it easier for the learner to understand concepts being taught. A classroom is said to be overcrowded in which the number of students exceeds the optimum level such that it causes hindrance in the teaching and learning process (Dabo, 2015). The strategies that the teachers use in teaching literacy in the classroom should be formulated with these priorities, goals and philosophy in mind as far as they pertain to the learning and proper grasping of the subject by the learners.

Snow and O'Connor (2016) argue that the number of children in a class has a bearing on the abilities and opportunities of teachers to closely observe and facilitate the literacy learning of diverse groups. The all-round performance of students was generally found to improve when the classes were having fewer student numbers. The teachers afforded checking the work of slow learners as they had enough time to do so. According to Ganimian and Murname (2016) evidence in their studies have shown that reduction in the size of the class have been effective on the teaching and learning processes only when the original classes had been very large. They then tracked the performances of individual learners after reduction in size. In the circuit where this study was done you could get class sizes beyond fifty learners in a class.

South Africa is a developing country and such class sizes are not unusual in rural areas like Mopani district.

2.3 Theoretical framework

This study was based on the Ideological Model of Literacy. Street (1984) brings up a distinction between what he called the Autonomous Model and the Ideological Model of literacy. He posits that the 'autonomous' model of literacy works from the assumption that literacy in itself - autonomously - will have effects on other social and cognitive practices, as in the early 'cognitive consequences' literature. The model disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin it and it is then presented as though they are neutral and universal. According to Searle (1985) this view of literacy presumes that the skills of reading, writing and enumerating are context free, are universal in time and space, and generate consequences for cognition, social progress and individual achievement, in other words, that they are generic skills. She argues that the adoption of skills-based approaches to instruction and structured curricula reflects literacy education as being the acquisition of sets of decontextualised rules and patterns, for example: phonics checklists, spelling rules and traditional grammar.

The autonomous model has had a fair share of criticism. Research in the social practice approach challenges this model and suggests that in practice dominant approaches based on the autonomous model are simply imposing western conceptions of literacy on to other cultures (Street, 2001). The ideological model of literacy is considered to be more culturally sensitive. It recognises that literacy practices vary from one context to another and cannot invariably be neutral. According to Street (1995) this model posits instead that literacy is practiced socially and therefore it cannot be a technical and neutral skill but that it derives meaning from cultural teachings and norms. He argues that the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being as recognised in a specific culture. Gee (1990) says that literacy, in this sense is therefore always contested, both its meanings and its practices, hence particular versions of it are always 'ideological', they are always rooted in a particular world-view and a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalise others.

According to Statistics South Africa (2009) literacy has been defined as that ability to read and write and at the same time understanding what it one is reading and writing. The research into the teaching of literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in schools that are located in a rural area like Mopani district cannot be devoid of a world-view. Thus it cannot be divorced from its rural context and the inherent views of the society. Because literacy is being defined in terms of any language it means being able to read in Sepedi will have overtones of the culture and belief systems of the community that speaks Sepedi. The culture and belief systems underlying literacy in English could be at loggerheads with the indigenous Sepedi-inspired culture and belief systems and this may have an impact on how the educators teach literacy skills. In the Sepedi culture when children are taught how to speak the word are usually associated with actions that the child follows.

Elkins (2002) posits that the fundamental aim of schooling is progressive improvements in the teaching and learning processes and therefore teachers need to be equipped with skills that derive from evidence coming from encounter with students. This is more critical when the educators are involved in the teaching of literacy which is foundational to all other subjects at school and a sound psychological grounding of learners (Ellis, 2005). Teachers must be capable of identifying those learners who experience reading difficulties. Studies have shown that at least 80 % of the learners that are classified by teachers as having learning difficulties experience problems in mastering reading skills (Louden, Ekins, Greaves, House, Milton, Nichols ,Rivalland, Rohl & Kraayenoord, 2000; Hay, Elias & Booker, 2005).

2.3 Empirical studies

Khan and Iqbal (2012) in a study conducted in Pakistan found that teachers were facing the problem of paying attention to each and every student in overcrowded

classroom and could not spare time to provide extra help to weak students. In overcrowded classes pupils tend to be anonymous, that is, children are, in most classes, attended to as a group not as individuals, and attention to individual pupils needs is usually difficult (Nakabugo, Albert & Maani, 2006). When pupils are not known by the teacher by their names there is no proper pupil – teacher bonding. The teacher remains a stranger to the learners. The learners in the grades 4 and 6 for this study are children of tender age and they need to be known by their teachers at the personal level of recognising each name. The knowing of names means the teacher can monitor the pupils' work. When marking their activities a teacher who knows these pupils by name can also make appropriate remarks about the individual. This would bring that family closeness which helps in the pupils understanding what they are taught. This could be part of the teaching and learning strategy that the teacher needs to successfully teach literacy skills.

The failure to mark the work of learners deprives them of the feedback that they rightly deserve so that they can individually check their progress. The learner needs to see how they are progressing in their skills to read, write correct grammar and pronounce correctly. A study by Sa'ád, Adamu and Sadiq (2014) in Nigeria which investigated the causes of poor performance among the public primary schools in Azare metropolis of Bauchi state revealed that overcrowded classes was among the causes of poor performance in mathematics. Nakabugo Nakabugo, Opolot-Okurut, Ssebbunga, Maani and Byamugisha (2008) conducted a study in Uganda to find strategies which teachers identified as having greater potential to facilitate teaching and learning in their large classes. One of the findings was that teachers experienced assessment difficulties such as the burden of marking and giving feedback to learners.

Waita (2012) conducted a study in Kenya, to determine how pupil teacher ratio (PTR) influenced performance of pupils in primary schools and measures that could be put in place to attain an ideal PTR in primary schools that would guarantee provision of quality education in the country. The findings of the study revealed that PTR significantly influences performance of pupils. The study showed that lower PTR increased average test scores in primary schools. The overcrowded class issue is one of the major challenges affecting low learning achievements in rural schools (Nakabugo, Albert & Maani, 2006). Once the PTR in this study exceeds the one

recommended by government by at least five, the researcher shall consider the classroom to be overcrowded.

Nakabugo et al., (2006) conducted a study that investigated the teaching of large classes in primary schools in Uganda. This study endeavoured to establish how teachers teach learners according to their levels of cognitive development within the overcrowded classroom. The findings were that it was difficult to reach out and interact with all learners, especially those with learning disability and the slow ones and the classroom movement was usually restricted to the front zone. One major strategy used in the overcrowded classrooms according to the teachers was employing group work to enhance learning in their large classes. They observed group work in thirty one percent of the studied lessons. The reason given by teachers for group work was to ease work management. The pupils were able to share the limited resources such as text books and other learning materials. They saw that in some classrooms desks had been pre-arranged to create a group work atmosphere and this helped teacher in respect to movement in class and classroom control as the arrangement created corridors of passage between different groups. When language learners work in groups they feel that they are not dictated to hurry to give sentences or answers compared to a whole-class approach (Long & Porter, 1985).

A study conducted by Hartney (2011) in Namibia, investigated the reading difficulties experienced by Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language in one primary school in the Khomas Education Region. The study found that the classes were overcrowded with a teacher-learner ratio of 1:40. Even though teachers did not work with individual learners they managed to give more work to the learners who had reading difficulties. The result of the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) survey conducted in South Africa in 1994 revealed that overcrowded classrooms hindered the progress towards completing the syllabus (DoE, 2008). These studies are silent on whether educators manage to complete the syllabus with the whole class and how those learners with poor competencies cope with remedial lessons in overcrowded classrooms.

A study by Meire (2011) has shown that the education system in South Africa has failed to produce competent learners. Some learners are not able to read, write and count at the expected levels and they are unable to execute tasks that demonstrate key skills associated with literacy and numeracy (DoE, 2008). Literacy may, therefore, be taken as the easiest test to ascertain how effective an education system is. Mentioning literacy and numeracy in the same breadth exposes the importance of skills in these two areas. Some studies in the South African context have shown that a significant proportion of learners are deficient in many of the literacy skills they are obliged to have in their formal and informal learning circumstances (Bharuthram 2012; Malda, Nel & van der Vijver, 2014). The modelling strategy is in line with the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model explained by Pearson and Gallagher (1983). In this model the teacher aptly demonstrates and explains the reading strategies together with the writing processes the learners are intended to acquire. The teacher thinks allowed by mentioning the intricacies of a passage to be read or words to be written.

Kalb and van Ours (2014) refer to reading aloud in its simplest form as the shared reading experience occurring between the learner and its teacher or parent. They posit that reading aloud as a teaching strategy has been found to be a critical factor in the development of literacy skills pre- and primary pupils. Other studies in support of this strategy have outlined the many benefits deriving from it which include motivating children to love to read, and improving basic comprehension and development of texts (Fox, 2013; Swanson, Vaughn, Wanzek, Petscher, Heckert, Cavanaugh, Kraft, & Tackett, 2011).

Reading aloud has been found to have a close relationship with several literacy skills and cognitive benefits. An analytical study by Swanson, Solis, Ciullo and McKenna (2012) of 29 studies found established that there were positive effects related to read-aloud strategy which touched on phonological awareness and print and comprehension concepts. This resulted in improved vocabulary prowess. Reading to children stories has been linked as well to positive emergent literacy and grasp of

reading skills. Australian Kids and Family Reading Report (2016) proved beyond doubt that reading aloud to children on repeated times is the most positive predictor of reading frequency for children. Gambrell and Marinak (2009) posit that the attitude towards reading by primary school pupils is greatly influenced positively by how they have encountered reading aloud in the home or school.

Drilling technique (DT) is one method or technique that has been used in the teaching of several subjects. Swanto and Din (2014) define DT as a method or strategy critical to language teaching. They say drilling places emphasis on structural patterns through oral repetitive practice. Drilling patterns differ can vary in format depending on who repeats the passage under study. It could be the whole class or half the class even alternating between boys and girls. The method can be implemented to repel boredom amongst the primary children. While the drilling technique is not a new practically it has been found to be of great value to primary pupils. Tica (2004) in his studies found that languages benefit from the drilling method as it eliminates problems related to pronunciation and aids in the memorising of both small and large portions of the language under study. Swanson and Sachse-Lee (2000) in a meta-analysis of 85 academic intervention studies with students that had learning barriers it was found that in spite of the practical or theoretical orientation of the research, the largest effect sizes were obtained by interventions that included systematic drill, repetition, practice, and review of the learning materials.

According to the research by Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) (2011):

- i) The educator-learner ratio and class size have an impact on teaching and learning. A smaller class size supports quality education.
- ii) Lower class size allows for more interaction between the educator and learners, resulting in quality teaching and learning.

A study by Kambuga (2013) investigated the interaction between teacher and pupils in the classroom during the teaching and learning process. The findings revealed that pupils did not get enough individual assistance from the teachers and that many pupils were afraid to ask questions in front of a class containing 120 pupils. According to

Barret (2007) once a class is oversized then equality of opportunity breaks down. Even with teachers who strive to know the pupils in their class, when it is overcrowded they might not manage to remember them all by their names. This means that an overcrowded classroom is a challenge to experience as well as new teachers in the field. The opportunities for learners to receive equal attention are thwarted because of oversized classes.

Dabo (2015) conducted the study to find which strategies teachers used in teaching overcrowded classes. The findings showed that teachers mostly used the lecture method. Challenges experienced by teaching overcrowded classes included that of teachers failing to practice a variety of methods, such as higher-order questioning and active learning approaches (Marais, 2016). The lecture method would be more suitable for the mature learners in high school or college. As for primary school learners under focus in this study the teaching method must be associated with closeness to the learner for purposes of proper guidance in language learning.

Benbow, Mizrachi, Oliver and Moshiro (2007) investigated the impact of class size in the developing world. The findings revealed that teachers had a difficulty in varying their instructional methods so as to cater to the needs of individual students. Teachers who ask for help are aware of either their shortcomings or that of the systems under which they are operating. This attitude works in favour of new strategies as these teachers are willing to get new innovation from other teachers or their principals. According to Benbow et al., (2007) few methods to teach in large classrooms have been systematically used in the developed world and there are a number of education projects which are addressing this deficit through in-service teacher training efforts as a response to teachers who are asking for help dealing with the problems they confront in large classrooms.

The developed world as mentioned earlier have a different classification of the term 'overcrowded' as a class of 36 learners could qualify as such, yet our experience in South Africa rural areas a class of 36 could pass for that 'ideal' class that is very normal. Benbow et al., (2007) have stated that few methods have been formulated in the developed world. This means we are supposed to develop our own methods in the

developing world on how to teach effectively in overcrowded classrooms as this is largely our problem.

This study interrogated the effective reading strategies employed by the teacher in overcrowded classrooms with particular reference to learners whose literacy competency does not measure up to the required level in Grade 4 and Grade 6. It will also examine what support the teacher is receiving from the school management team and curriculum advisers.

Van Kraayenoord and Paris (1994) found that teachers of year 3 and 4 classes in Australian primary schools sometimes they gave instruction to the entire class, but at other times, they would teach small groups or individuals. They used strategies which were tailored to the task and texts. They go on to say that these teachers act as facilitators who encourage pupils to evaluate and improve their own reading and writing. In the current study the classrooms are overcrowded and whether the teachers are managing to host smaller groups of those pupils that need special remedial lessons to bring their literacy levels to the appropriate levels will be investigated. Many studies have shown the benefits and the positive effects of implementing group work within the school classroom (Nair & Alwee, 2012; Tuan & Nhu, 2010; Genesee, 1994). These have shown that students participating in group work with their peers have the opportunity to develop and enhance both social and intellectual skills. Nair and Alwee (2012) have found that some of the desirable qualities of group work are being tolerant, having team spirit, compromising, and establishing purposeful learning. According to Johnson, Johnson and Smith (2014) groups are characterised by positive interdependence in which each student views that if he or she improves individual performance then this will impact positively on the performance of the whole group.

In the United States the National Commission on Writing (2003) reported that reading had become most neglected in classrooms. As a result the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) was developed. According to Harris, Graham, Friedlander and Leslie (2013) the SRSD instruction includes thorough interactive learning of powerful methods capable of enabling learners to write both across and within genres. The

results of this strategy have been reported to be successful because instruction takes place across six interactive stages with gradual release of responsibility for writing to students (Harris & Graham, 2009).

Caddy (2015) conducted a study to investigate on what strategies teachers used when teaching reading English as an additional language to learners in Grade 2. The findings of the study revealed that learners responded positively to reading strategies that encouraged them to become actively involved in the lesson. A study by Imtiaz (2014) on exploring strategies for English language teaching of Pakistani students in public sector colleges revealed that English language teachers should promote communicative approach for language teaching by adopting activity based teaching.

Finn, Pannozzo and Achilles (2003) found that learners engaged in smaller classes and groups benefited from a structure in class that was not centralised in the teacher but encouraged social engagement and academic engagement. They describe social engagement to mean a learner would interact socially with both the teacher and other students. To be academically engaged referred to the attitude of the learners and deliberate response to the learning process. They found that students are placed in smaller classes and even groups became more engaged with each other in both social and academic dimensions.

Smith, Hardman and Wall (2003) studied interactive whole class teaching in the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) in the United Kingdom. A major feature of these strategies were an emphasis on direct 'interactive whole class teaching'. They found that effective teachers had to use an interactive method of teaching in which they probed learners for answers to their questions to initiate more discussion (Smith et al., 2003). A study by Sandholtz (2011) underscores that teachers should practise reflective practice which afforded the focus to be on the learner. The difficult situations come up in context-specific approaches which demand analysing different aspects. In the current study the aim would be to establish whether

teachers have moved from formal approaches to innovative methods and whether they receive support for innovation from their supervisors.

UNESCO (n.d.) has listed shared reading as an interactive process of reading that must be engaged by the whole class in teaching literacy. The children will participate in the process by reading key words and phrases they know and the teacher will teach them by reading aloud the specific words they are supposed to know. Vukelich, Christie and Enz (2008) posit that shared reading is a whole class reading activity in which the teacher and learners read together. They found that this reading strategy expands opportunities for teachers to introduce comprehension passages to gauge the pupils' abilities to grasp content. At the same time the teacher is able to exert control over the pupils by dictating the reading pace and discuss meanings of words encountered.

UNESCO (n.d.) contends that while the children get involved in shared reading, they need time to read the appropriate text by themselves. This is called independent reading. UNESCO advocates that each class should have a reading corner. In that corner there must be materials for children to read on their own without interference. A wide variety of materials in the classroom and school library has been noticed as influencing the learners to read.

Petreñas, Puigdemívol and Campdepadrós (2013) studied practices in Spanish schools and found a practice they refer to as "exclusionary" in which teaching was provided to students experiencing problems with the syllabus requirements. This was done during teaching hours and outside the classroom. The other learners would continue receiving other learning materials in class. Those in class would actually cover new materials that those removed for a parallel lesson outside. Some families disclosed in interviews that removing students from classroom during "instrumental teaching hours is counterproductive because they lose track of those subjects" and this adds to certain kinds of learning deficits when compared to the rest of the students.

This study was keen to establish whether there are extra lessons hosted by the teacher for those learners who have poor literacy and numeracy competences and if so are these done during teaching hours or any other time. Such a strategy could work where the learners isolated during lesson time would be taught whatever the curriculum contains so that at the end of the year these learners would have missed nothing. The management of such a strategy should be properly done so as not to create a parallel class of poor performers which would then usher problems associated with inferiority complex. This intervention could be used intermittently without making it a permanent feature to avoid feelings of exclusion.

Debate has been used by teachers to hone the skills of their pupils in reading and writing Shaw (2012) that during the debate time pupils sharpen their use of verbal communication and skills to organise their work into logical steps. To convince their audience, they must be clear about what they are going to say. Tessier (2009) says that debate is superior to other teaching methods because it helps those participating to be able develop their own viewpoints. Small group debates are simple to implement, well received and enjoyed by students and are of benefit to both debating students and listeners. Learners who enjoy debating in the short run gain skills for remembering material apart from other skills needed in life (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; McGraw-Hill, 2009). Debating opens up a learner to criticism and laughter which is light (Tu, 2004).

Griffith and Ruan (2007) discuss one strategy that is used when teaching literacy in primary school that has been referred to as story innovation but has not been implemented by many primary schools. The teacher determines the way a story can be innovated and then familiarises the pupils with a given sentence and section in the story which can be innovated. The process benefits learners as it develops their vocabulary around that particular topic which later will be used in story innovation. Teachers can use this strategy to support learners with difficulties in reading language.

In one of the studies in Kenya which Spaul, Van der Berg, Wills, Gustafsson and Kotze (2016) refer to, class size was reduced from about 90 students to about 43 students

by using a contract teacher. In a similar study in Andhra Pradesh, India, Muralidharan and Sundaraman (2013) found that reducing the pupil-teacher ratio of 36 by 10% using either a contract teacher or a regular civil-service teacher led to increase in students' performance. The use of other personnel to reduce the class size is an intervention strategy in these two studies to improve the teaching and learning class environment. Of interest in the current study would be to establish whether the teachers in the current study are using similar strategies so as to spend more contact time with learners that have with poor competencies. Having other personnel who can come in to help would mean the involvement of the School Governing Body (SGB) of the school when it comes to South Africa. The SGB has authority to manage the per capita grant that comes from government in what is referred to as standards and norms and the governors are allowed to spend up to 60 % of the money to meet curriculum needs. The SGB can thus hire extra personnel in form of educators or otherwise on a part time basis to help in the management of overcrowded classrooms.

Barret (2007) studied models of classroom practice in Tanzanian primary schools. She found that first year and second year classes had over a hundred pupils sitting on all the available floor space. This hindered the teacher from walking around to monitor the pupils' work. A teacher of a year 1 class of 106 learners remarked that there was too much noise in class such that she could not concentrate on individual learners. Her ability to go around the class was greatly curtailed (Barret, 2007). The research also revealed that the higher year teachers in which learners averaged seventy to eighty per class expressed frustration at the time they took to mark work done by learners which infringed on the time needed to teach them. These teachers preferred to mark because the books provided documentary evidence used by inspectors to ensure that teachers were delivering the syllabus. Therefore teachers preferred to mark the activity books because that was the major evidence that they were doing their work (Barret, 2007). From these findings it can be concluded that the higher year teachers valued the evidence of accountability as shown by books that by the knowledge the learners obtained not of their choice but imposed by the requirements of the system that demanded inspectors to use books as the sole criterion to prove that work was being done. If such a situation prevails in classes that have learners with special needs as regards competences in literacy these would unmistakably be

disadvantaged because the teacher who has no time for the overcrowded class may not set aside time for a smaller group that will consume his or her time for marking.

Makhubele (2015) conducted a study in Man'ombe circuit of Mopani District, to explore the experiences of Grade 4 teachers while fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in implementing effective reading practices in the classroom. The findings of the study have shown that teachers did not receive any support in the implementation of effective reading strategies from head of department, deputy principal, principal and curriculum advisor. Support at these levels is very crucial for the educator because this does not leave the battle against overcrowded delivery of lessons to the educator. Strategies can be devised by other stakeholders and shared with the educator. This may lead to getting the best from the various innovations that come from other quarters.

Differentiated Instruction (DI) is an approach that recognises the strengths and weaknesses of diverse learners and calls upon the teacher to tailor their instruction around these Tomlinson (2001). Tricarico and Yendol-Hoppey (2012) acknowledge that DI does not disadvantage one category of learners over the other but allows learners to occupy their appropriate place on the ability continuum because it allows a teacher to meet the varied needs of all students. They, however, warn that a major difficulty which teachers face when trying to accommodate the needs of their gifted students is their lack of subject knowledge. The lack of subject knowledge by educators has been shown to be prevalent in South African schools in the SACMEQ III (2007) especially in mathematics.

There are schools in the rural areas where learners have access to computers. These computers may be used as part of teaching various subjects. There is no evidence on whether teachers are affording their learners the access to computers as a learning strategy in Mamaila Circuit. According to the study by Wu, Kuo and Wang (2017) on ways of improving remedial instructional methods at primary schools, it was found that students who had tailored assessment and individualised prompting through the computer performed significantly higher in primary school mathematics than those with individualised instruction and with didactic teaching, respectively. It was found

that the computerised dynamic adaptive assessment system could help students to learn effectively.

Similarly, computers can be used to learn a language and get an immediate feedback on their grammar in terms of spellings and pronunciation. There are programmes that can be used by the learners where they type in words to check their spelling abilities, coaching how to construct sentences and compositions. To the primary school learners the computer may become fun while at the same time they will acquire important skills in the process. The computer may reduce the oversight workload of the educator in the overcrowded classroom.

For facilitating literacy skills Naidoo, Reddy and Dorasamy (2014) proposed that the strategies that assist learners to be able to speedily and efficiently should encompass previewing, predicting, skimming and scanning, guessing through applying prior knowledge and paraphrasing. These strategies must be applicable, therefore, in both languages of Sepedi and English. These strategies could help learners with poor literacy skills to be able to read speedily and efficiently in both languages.

Progress International National Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (2006) which is an assessment of reading comprehension of learners in the intermediate phase was administered to South African learners in Grades 4 and 5. Of the forty five participating countries, South Africa was placed last with a score of 302 with benchmark of 400 being the cut off point for low achievers (Naidoo et al, 2014). Because of these poor results, the Department of Education came up with the Foundation for Learning Campaign (FFLC) as a strategy which focused on the improvement of learner performance in literacy and numeracy and teachers have regarded the FFLC as a necessary and welcome initiative to establish uniform literacy and numeracy standard in South Africa (Mbhalati, 2012). The FFLC entails guiding the teacher through paces that must be covered at particular times of the year, supply of a template that helps the teacher in a lesson, apparatus that need to be used as well as how the assessment should be done.

The Department of Education came up with another strategy referred to as Spelling Bee which targeted learners in Grade 4 and 6. The strategy was aimed at improving

learners' performance in languages, especially in English (DBE, 2015). Spelling Bee is a game in which the participants compete in spelling words orally. The Spelling Bee as a strategy could also be converted for use in literacy teaching for the Sepedi language because it involves spelling words orally. The oral exercises could be used for setting quiz targets between groups of learners to encourage competition for knowing more words than the other group. Medwell, Wray, Poulson and Fox (1998) found that effective teachers of literacy were very specific about literacy activities at the whole text, word and sentence levels and that these brought out the meaning that is created.

Another national strategy launched by the Department is the National Reading Strategy (NRS) which aims to improve the reading competences of all learners in the country, including those who experience barriers to learning and learners who are at special school and youth centre (DoE, 2008). The teachers experiencing overcrowded classrooms could find the NRS provisions easy to use for their situation if it was formulated with their plight in mind. If it deals only with a class of normal size then the teachers would have to come up with their own innovations.

A plan was instituted by the Department to roll out what it called Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). This was done in 100 schools per province for learners doing grades 1 to 3 in 2005 (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). EGRA initiative was targeted at assessing reading skills at the foundation phase. If reading problems were identified early then the teaching strategies would be developed to help the learners earlier in their schooling years (DBE, 2014). These literacy initiatives positively indicate the level of awareness by the government on the problems of literacy. At the same time it shows that government is responding to the needs of the child at different levels with appropriate responses (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). The EGRA thrust is noble indeed because it provides for instruction to be tailored around deficiencies in reading skills. Sarwar and Mian (2016) posit that the use of group work is a tried and tested option that language teachers should bring on board in their classes. They found that it meets the needs of the students and reduces those problems of discipline control, individual attention and assessment associated with large classes.

The Integrated National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (INLNS) was the response to the need for urgency in addressing the low achievement levels of learners in literacy and numeracy as confirmed in poor national (ANA), regional (SACMEQ), and international (PIRLS) assessment (DBE, 2011).

Okedara and Okedara (1992) posit that the mother tongue has been shown to be best medium for teaching literacy skills. They contend the same to be true for psychological, educational and sociological reasons. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that works most automatically in one's mind for the expression and understanding of facts. UNESCO (1953) contended that educationally, one learns more quickly through the use of vernacular language.

The mother tongue becomes the first medium through which the learner associates their culture with daily activities. Learning literacy at school would therefore reinforce the learner's experiences at home. Gudschinky (1977) argues by saying that the teaching of literacy in the mother tongue is a bridge to the acquisition of a second language. Her point of departure is that pedagogically learning must begin with the known and proceed to the unknown. According to Wagner, Spratt and Ezzaki the transfer of literacy takes place in spite of the lack of similarity of the scripts of the two languages because what is important is how they decode in the first-language experience. These arguments are vitally important to the current study in that the learners use Sepedi as their mother tongue. According to Abel (2003) there exists some complicated language scenarios in school situations because for many students, the language of instruction may be a third or even fourth language.

A study conducted by Wium and Louw (2012) on continued professional development of teachers to facilitate language used in numeracy and mathematics revealed that learners in South African schools have been found to perform poorly in mathematics because they do not understand the language used in solving mathematical problems. The current South African curriculum includes numeracy in the foundation phase as basis for mathematics, which is presented in Grade 4 and onwards (Wium & Louw, 2012). It is therefore imperative that all children should acquire literacy skills relevant for the foundation phase.

According to Schleppegrell (2007) when learners begin to learn a new discipline, knowing the language of this discipline is integral to the understanding of the discipline. Language and discipline cannot be separated. Thus Raiker (2002) contends that the language of mathematics needs to be acquired because the teaching of mathematics occurs through talking and the work of the learner is assessed through the oral and written language. There are instances where some learners have difficulty to read and understand a question simultaneously despite the fact that the relevant information is placed right before them (Rikhotso, 2015). The mathematical processes themselves are plain but the learner has a problem in understanding the language of mathematics (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Literacy skills are critical as they lay the foundation for a learner to understand the language of mathematics and other disciplines.

Some researchers have found that a majority of black African learners have a negative attitude with respect to schooling because of the language used in teaching them (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Balfour (1999) posits that the language of teaching in township schools is a problem which the stakeholders in education have failed to recognise. According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986) black learners experience problem because they cannot study in their home language. He states that English is the preferred medium of instruction in school because some indigenous languages do not have the complexity to enable them to be used in technical and scientific contexts. Lotherington (2013) corroborates this point by declaring that languages are not social equals. There is a biased emphasis on those languages that are used for commercial purposes to the detriment of the black African home languages. A research by Bush and Glover (2009) into disadvantaged schools established that after learning in their mother tongue of IsiZulu and XiTsonga in grades 1 to 3 learners had very limited opportunity to speak English outside the classroom or at home, because most parents do not speak English.

In South African schools, home language instruction is encouraged in the first four years of formal schooling (DoE, 2004), however, this is not always achieved as South Africa is a multilingual country and as a result learners are taught in a language which is either a second or third language. In such instances learners are unable to use the richness and depth of their home language knowledge to enhance the reading experience and this affects reading efficiency (Madihlaba, 2013).

The extent to which the language of the learners is developed has an impact on the ability of the learners to understand and read. Madihlaba (2013) posits that language skills of vocabulary, comprehension, construction, reading and spelling are directly related to the learners' performance levels in class. The home language education policy in South Africa stipulates that learners should start learning at school in their home language until grade three (Machaba, 2013). The language of instruction changes from African languages to English for most schools that indicates that 80% or more of South Africans learn in a language different from their home language (Howie, Venter & Van Staden, 2008). Hinkel (2005) states that for second language reading to take place the reader must have developed proficiency in that language. Most learners in South Africa do not learn in their mother tongue and most schools have inadequate language policies which do not address the learning needs of the learner (Monitoring Learning Achievement, 1999). If the curriculum has been properly implemented learners should, therefore, be able to read and write and perform basic mathematical calculations by the end of grade 3 (Machaba, 2013).

Combrinck, Staden and Roux (2014) in their study found that there were teachers who ignored teaching some reading skills at the beginning of the foundation phase in grade 1 and only introduced them in grade 3. These neglected skills and strategies are the reading of isolated sentences, reading of connected text, identifying information within text, and identifying the main idea of a text (Combrinck, Staden & Roux, 2014). The late introduction of these skills, according to these researchers, is responsible for inadequate reading abilities in grade 4 and the poor showing by South African learners in the PIRLS tests.

Learners from low socio-economic schools (SES) require a variety of experiences to facilitate the natural transition from oral language used at home to functional literate language used in school, moreover these children living in poverty are at risk for learning disorders, and need support (Machaba, 2013).

Zimmerman (2014) presents in-depth findings from Grade 4 reading comprehension lesson observations conducted in six case study schools. The study revealed that learners were interested in the lesson and participated in answering questions posed

by the teacher, however, when questioned directly by the teacher some learners were largely unaware of what was going on in the lesson, due either to incomprehension or distraction. The learners were passive and non-responsive to the closed questions the teacher posed. In some instances, when a learner did respond, it was clear that he or she had not understood the story at all.

One of the most early studies was the Threshold Project (McDonald 1990, cited in Hoadley, 2012) examining the nature of language and learning difficulties that black Standard 3 (Grade 5) children experienced when they changed from their home language of Sepedi to English as a medium of instruction and learning. The study showed how learners had mastered about 700 words at most in English, while the curriculum required them to know at least 7000 words. However, what also made it impossible for students to read with meaning or learn effectively was that they did not have sufficient grasp of the linguistic structure of the English language. The sudden transition to English as medium of instruction resulted in most learners resorting to rote learning content, which they did not understand. McDonald (1990) found that the children are unable to comprehend what they have to learn to the extent that they only dimly perceive the implications and linkages between the concepts they are presented with. A grasp of only 10 % of the words that should have been mastered in English has serious consequences on the ability of these learners to understand other subjects. Rote learning does not polish individual learner skills but could even shield them from exposure and these would be carried to the next grade.

Howie (2007) recommends that in order to be successful in later years in the schooling system, pupils need to be taught the language of teaching and learning from the foundation phase, within a context of Home language instruction. According to Spaul et al (2016) many African children complete Grade 1-3 without being able to read properly in their home - language, with little understanding of English in which they will be taught from Grade 4. These children are also unable and to move from basic counting to true calculation using the four operations of addition, multiplication, division and subtraction and as a result the learning deficits accumulate in language and mathematics creating cognitive backlogs that progressively inhibit the acquisition of more complex competencies (Schollar, 2008). The studies on children whose home language is not English by Hakuta, Butler and Witt (2000) have shown that they

typically take three to five years to achieve advanced proficiency in oral English and four to seven years to develop academic English proficiency. According to Espinosa (2014) the speed of language acquisition depends on both the child and environmental factors.

A study by Castro (2014, cited in Barrow & Markman-Pithers, 2016) has recommended frequent assessments in the first and second language of a learner in order to adapt teaching strategy to the child's development levels of language proficiency. He also proffered use of focused, small group activities that enable children opportunities to answer questions. In this way learners receive more individualised instruction and promote socio-emotional development by creating positive teacher-student relationships while facilitating peer interactions. Poor reading influences negatively the ability of these learners to understand mathematics (Spaull et al (2016). Schollar (2008) contends that the opportunity of learning how to read fluently and accurately is not afforded to the majority of South African children and they never get to grips with this early phase of their school life. According to UNESCO (2013) while there has been great progress in sub-Saharan African in the past ten years there is still a big number of pupils who are exiting after completing their school without competence in reading and numeracy.

Fairclough (1989) posited that cultural knowledge is transmitted from one generation to the other through language. The cultural knowledge is characteristic of a particular context. According to Battiste (2000) the Aboriginal languages constitute the basic platform upon which rests the cultures and literatures and histories of the Aborigine nation. Thus he says these languages play a crucial role in the teaching and learning processes for both at school and home.

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) recognises that indigenous languages are facing what he termed linguistic genocide as they get side-lined through planning by some governments. As a consequence use of indigenous language in instruction in schools is a forefront measure to reclaim the cultural space and relevance of the languages. Ovando and Gourd (1996) posit that the use of the indigenous language enables the students to assume enhanced power over the educational process. Au (1993) made an observation that teachers who use culturally compatible instruction for reading by

learners help the students to find their identity in time and space and to take positive attitude towards their culture. Holiday (1985) contends that what the learners experience outside school they do not readily apply that to their school experiences yet learning should be a continuous process. He reckons that most students do not realise the strategies they engage culturally at home should be used to solve problems at school. He asserts that when activities are combined in alternating teaching and retelling the students are able to recognise what is relevant through language.

It is critical that a learner's cultural identity be established through self-awareness in their mother tongue. The teachers need to understand the cultural environments of the students for them to incorporate these in the teaching of another language like English. Disregarding the cultural environment where the learner hails from affects the self-esteem of that learner adversely if the first language has not been established prior to introducing (Bougie, Wright & Taylor 2003). Other studies have progressively shown how vital the cultural background bears influence on the learning environment of the child (Demmert, 2001; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Gardner, 1985, 1995; Vygotsky, 1944).

Demmert (2011) recognises that critical issues to the learning processes include culture, language, cognition, the community and socialisation. These are facilitated through the use of language. Thus literacy is pivotal to the full integration of these ingredients to learning. He says more important is the setting within which language and condition are developed as it is culturally biased. A study by Sabatin (2013) investigated the effect of cultural background knowledge on the how the learner achieved reading comprehension. The study was done in order to improve the reading comprehension of Palestinian children in the second language – English. He found that the knowledge of the cultural background by the students enhanced their achievement in reading comprehension. According to Nuttal (1996) it is important for learners to understand the cultural orientation of the text for them to understand the intended meaning by the writer.

The implication of these studies to literacy teaching strategy is that first a learner needs to be grounded in their original home culture because they only relate to it through use of language. The introduction of the second language in this case English should

provide a second culture to the learner and the depth to which the language will be understood hinges on the culture at home. Failure to appreciate one's home culture therefore could lead to confusion when the second language is introduced and to achieve literacy levels prescribed by the syllabus becomes almost practically impossible.

Parental involvement is defined by Nyama (2010) as a dynamic process in which teachers and parents work together to the benefit of the learner. In this study parental involvement will refer to the engagement of the parents in the learning of their children both in home and school activities as they collaborate with the teacher. The researcher will consider this collaboration as a strategy by the teachers.

The constitution states that parents, learners, and teachers shall promote and accept the responsibility for the organization, governance and funding of schools, in partnership with the state (South African Schools Act, 1996:2). This democratisation of education in South Africa required a new national education system which suggested the participation in school activities by all stakeholders, especially parents. Parents are, therefore, expected to play a prominent role in the education of their children. Social structures like parents should be involved in education (Anney et al, 2016). However, according to Louw (1999) many South African parents, particularly in previously disadvantaged communities, are reluctant and unwilling to be involved and participate in their children's school activities. Studies have shown that inadequate involvement from parents can lead to a number of problems. These problems include lack of effective learning and teaching that led to low pass rates by learners. The learners felt that their parents do not care about them or their education (Leicester & Pearce, 2000; Van der Westhuizen & De Bruyn, 2002). When parents neglect their educational task, educators are faced with the enormous challenge and responsibility of making a difference in the learners' spiritual, moral and social lives Myeko (2000).

The schools in the study belong to the previously disadvantaged black areas and it is possible their lack of cooperation could hamper the strategies that the literacy teachers employ in teaching the learners. Even when a parent or guardian is unable to read and write but they could encourage their child to read while they listen. The skills to listen can encourage the learner to a great extent in their school work.

Geske and Ozola (2008) conducted a study to find out the reasons behind low level of reading literacy among primary school students. The findings revealed that students who were achieving high success in reading literacy, like reading for their own enjoyment, came from families where parents spend a lot of time on reading. According to Kenway (1996 as cited in Stephinah, 2014), parents who speak and read to their children contribute to better performance in their children's reading at school, even when the parents cannot speak the language of learning and teaching in the school. Dieden and Gustafson (2003) found that learners living in rural areas performed poorly since their parents were absent because they worked in town. Pretorius and Naude (2002) posit that a lack of reading culture at home for black South Africans is contributing to poor reading and writing skills by learners in the townships. Effective teachers for reading involve parents at home as learners are given reading tasks that parents engage in an overseeing function (Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, Whetsel & Green, 2004). This is corroborated by Makgato and Mji (2006) who investigated poor performance by pupils in mathematics and literacy. The findings showed the vital role parents play in the education of their children regarding language usage in the two subjects. Where parents were not involved in helping their children when they encountered problems at home the study recorded poor performance by the children in their school activities. A study by Tshabalala (2013) in Zimbabwe to investigate the parental involvement in primary schools found that parental involvement was a pre-requisite for improving the culture of teaching and learning in schools. He also found that schools were doing more to involve parents than was legally permissible.

Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004) conducted the study on black parental involvement in education. The findings of the study revealed that the black parents' role is crucial in the enhancement of learner success. Parents who played little or no role in their children's homework and study programmes contributed to the poor performance of their children in the classroom.

Stephinah (2014) conducted a study to examine the parental involvement by African parents in the Education of their children in the foundation phase which showed that during the ethnographic observation, some parents appeared to be impatient and used

harsh words towards their children once they realised they had made mistakes during reading supervision. However, a few parents seemed to be more patient and allowed their children more time to correct their mistakes. One of the findings was that there was definite evidence of lack of playing a supportive role by African parents in the education of their children.

Parents are not trained teachers and as such do not possess the teaching methods that teachers get from the college. The parents need to be coached on what they should do at home to support their children. The teacher should not just expect them to know their role but should be coached by the teacher on how to check whether the child is doing the work at home and listening to reading activities. Once the child acknowledges the combined effort of both parent and teacher they should feel encouraged.

The involvement of parents in the learning of their children would involve the role of the School Governing Body (SGB) as a stakeholder. Parents are represented in the SGB. The mobilisation of parents to come on board in terms of participating in the school activities their children goes beyond the responsibilities of the teacher. Therefore there should be cooperation between the literacy teacher and the SGB to encourage parents to play their role. Thus there should be strategies in the teaching of literacy that involve the teacher and the other stakeholders. NICHD (2004) has listed quality parenting in a rational environment as one of three environmental influences that positively impact on the learning of the child.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2003) have promoted the use of film or moving image as a strategy for teaching literacy or other important subjects. It argues that the essential aspect of film or TV is the incorporation of this media into the learning experience of primary school children. The department emphasizes the vital importance of active learning, the advantage of linking home and school, the deepening of level of understanding texts in context, and a quicker way of understanding culture and society from the screen. According to Buckingham (1990) pupils come to school knowing many things as observed on the TV or film media. He adds that the teacher must take advantage of this already existing knowledge within the child's mind and build on it to develop new frontiers of insight and understanding.

DfES (2003) has found that for those learners where English is an additional language used in school the use of film can engage the pupils in autonomous learning. It posits that film has a critical role to play in the literacy curriculum because it is active, meaningful and challenges children irrespective of gender or ethnicity. From studies it has been shown that more teachers can work from moving image texts to what is printed at will and in any sequence to improve the learners' reading skills and responses in both print and film media.

Ukurut (2014) conducted a study in Uganda, to investigate factors that hinder pupils' opportunities to learn mathematics in primary schools in Uganda. The findings of the study revealed that overcrowded classrooms lead to shortage of instructional materials and that high pupil to teacher ratio minimised possibilities of individual attention to the pupil. Petersen (2009) conducted a study in the Cape flats, to explore the factors that affect learners' performance in reading English. The findings of the study revealed that lack of resources to have each individual learner materials hampered the reading process in classes that were overcrowded. The learners had a shortcoming in interactive reading skills. They were nervous to read as individuals in class. This finding has a bearing on my study as it looks at those learners who have poor reading skills and what strategy the teacher is using to make them to be able to read independently and not as a whole class reading in one chorus when faced with fewer resources.

Studies by Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) and Makoe (2007) attest to claims that South African schools are not well resourced with libraries and where they were available most were without adequate stocks of books. Learners therefore had little opportunity to read and spent most of the time playing. One of their findings was that learners from these environments were unable to acquire reading levels similar to or on par with their peers and this made them to feel inferior.

According to Matshipi, Mulaudzi and Mashau (2017) shortage of learner-teacher support material (LTSM) can be a problem, with too few copies of textbooks available and it becomes futile to assign both class and home work when the materials cannot cover all the learners in the overcrowded classroom. Gill (1992) reckons that the knowledge of how words work is necessary for the learners to understand what is on

the printed page. According to the study by Naidoo, Reddy and Dorasamy (2014) children who have greater access to books and other literacy materials learn to read more easily than children who come with very little literacy experience. The lack of access to quality reading materials is another factor that is contributing to poor performance (Uwatt & Egbe, 2011). Tshabalala and Ncube (2012) conducted a study in Zimbabwe to investigate what learners' perceptions on high failure in mathematics in Nkayi district of Matabeleland province. The study revealed that pupils attributed their failure mainly to lack of material resources.

A study conducted by Kewaza and Welch (2013) to examine how big class sizes affected the use of teaching materials for reading in lower primary classes found that although materials like manila papers and coloured markers were not regularly supplied to them, the few that they got were used by the teachers to design teaching materials for reading if the teachers had the time. This meant that learners were deprived access to these materials which would help in enhancing their understanding of the subject. This would in turn hinder the progress of those learners who might have needed special attention because of their inadequate competence in other subjects.

Trudell, Dowd, Piper and Block (2012) conducted a transnational thematic study of early-grade literacy which brought together current research findings and program outcomes in the area of early-grade literacy in African nations, highlighting lessons learned and suggested possible future direction for improving early-grade achievement in reading and writing. Their findings and recommendations included the following:

- i. Literacy – specifically, learning to read and write - must be central to the primary education curriculum and that the time allotted to reading and writing instruction in the curriculum must reflect this priority.
- ii. Children learn to read and write successfully when they engage regularly with authentic and enjoyable reading and writing activities, and when they master the building blocks of text (letters, syllables, words) within a context of meaningful use of reading and writing.
- iii. Regular assessment of students' literacy learning is essential, in order to ensure that learning is taking place as planned. Continuous assessment should

be done in the classroom itself, as part of the ongoing teaching and learning experience.

- iv. Since reading and writing are meaning-filled activities, learning to read and write must also be meaning-based; this means, among other things, that it must be done in a language the student understands.
- v. In Uganda the study showed that while the mother tongue was used extensively as medium of instruction, very few children have textbooks or reading materials in that language; this makes it extremely difficult for the teacher to use the mother tongue effectively for teaching.
- vi. There is a close relationship between knowing the letter sounds of the alphabet and reading ability. This suggests that one of the key skills predictive of success is whether children have letter-sound correspondence skills, and have them fluently. This fundamental skill, which is supposed to be taught in Grade 1, has been found lacking in even Grade 4 in some schools.

A study by Tshiunza, Shilongo and Bina (2017) focused on the teaching methods of reading used in elementary school. This was conducted in the D R Congo where the teaching of reading according to DR Congo's National curriculum of Primary Education (PNEP, 2014) recommends four possible teaching methods and educational equipment to be made available to literacy teachers. The purpose of the quantitative and quasi-experimental study was to test the theory of the positive effects of an effective teaching method by comparing the effectiveness of different teaching methods. The methods were used in elementary reading to improve the pupils' academic performance. However, some variables were controlled. These were the socio-professional characteristics of the teachers, the socio-economic characteristics of the parents and the targeted population of second year pupils in primary school. The researchers found that the methods used by the teacher to conduct his or her lessons while they were capable of stimulating the learners into action, assisting them to learn, the same methods could also be the cause for the failure of learners. In such circumstances the learners would fail to acquire the necessary skills for reading, writing and oral expression, or engage in quiet reading, loud reading, expressive reading or explanation of texts. Tshiunza et al., (2017) found that a teaching method cannot be independent of the how the teacher speaks and acts while using the method to teach. Thus they reckon that effective schooling for all pupils is critically dependent

on the competency of the teachers especially in reading instruction. Studies have also suggested that teachers must be supported in capacity-building to maintain high teaching standards achievable through professional learning at all levels of their careers (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Hattie, 2005).

2.4 Chapter summary

The chapter has discussed the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that guided this study. Several studies have been reviewed that do have a bearing on the teaching of literacy in schools, including overcrowded schools. Government intervention strategies have also been discussed. The next chapter outlines the research methodology and design adopted for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Chapter two outlined the theoretical framework and studies that had a bearing on this study. This chapter discusses research paradigm for this study, research design and methodology, data generation methods, the presentation of data, analysis and interpretation procedures. Reliability, validity, trustworthiness, and ethical matters also come into focus.

3.2 Research paradigm for this study

Kuhn (1970) coined the term *paradigm* as the entire aggregate of beliefs, values and methods for providing solutions in any given community. Research is guided by a set of beliefs about the world and how it should be understood and studied to guide action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). A research paradigm gives the set of fundamental assumptions and beliefs on how the world is perceived which then serves as a thinking framework that guides the behaviour of the researcher (Jonker & Pennik, 2010; Guba, 1990). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003) a research paradigm is multi-method in nature and involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach on the subject under discussion. According to Thomas (2009) paradigms are shared ideas in a given community of inquiry which dictate the thought processes of researchers and the acceptable rules to be followed in the research.

The study was guided by the interpretive paradigm. The interpretivist researcher tends to rely upon the views of the participants on the situation under study (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) the interpretive paradigm is based on people's beliefs, attitudes and perceptions. To put it differently, constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge but they build it (Schwandt, 1994).

The interpretivist paradigm was appropriate for this study because I endeavoured to understand, explain and describe teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in mainstream schools. The paradigm allowed participants to express their own feelings, attitudes and perceptions about what they encountered as they were teaching in overcrowded classrooms.

3.3 Research Design

According to Taylor (2000) research designs are constructed plans and strategies that are developed to seek and discover answers to research questions. A research design is a plan or strategy which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of respondents, data gathering techniques to be used and the data analysis to be done (Maree, 2007). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) define research methodology as a design whereby the research selects data collection and analysis procedures to investigate a specific research problem.

In this study, I used the case study design. The qualitative research is generally inductive (Frankel & Devers, 2000), being highly associated with the interpretivism philosophy thereby allowing the researcher to provide subjective reasoning with the help of various real life examples (Ridenour & Newman, 2008). According to Denzin (2001) the qualitative researcher does not stand outside or above the study but is situated within the very processes being studied, and must seek instead illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations. The qualitative approach is also referred to as the interpretative, constructive or positivist approach (Leedy & Ormond, 2001). Broadly defined qualitative research means that kind of research in which findings are not derived by means of statistical procedures or mathematical quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

A case study has been regarded as a design that facilitates a deep investigation of a contemporary real life phenomenon in its natural environment (Wahyuni, 2012). A qualitative case study presents opportunities to explore or describe a phenomenon in context using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It can be used to explore individuals and organisations, simple through complex interventions, relationships, the community and programs (Yin, 2003).

3.3.1 Population

A population of a study is the entire group of persons or set of objects and events the researcher is interested in gaining information and drawing conclusions about (Van Rensburg, 2010). The population of this study were literacy teachers from 13 primary schools which had the challenge of overcrowded classrooms.

3.3.2 Purposive Sampling

According to Field (2005) a sample is a smaller collection of units from a population used to determine truths about that population. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) summarise four key elements that are important in sampling as the sample size, representativeness and parameters of the sample, access to the sample and the sampling strategy to be used. In this study, purposive sampling procedure was used. Palys (2008) contends that purposive sampling is synonymous with qualitative research. In this research only those teachers who taught in a school with overcrowded classrooms were chosen.

The sample comprised of teachers from three primary schools that were affected by overcrowded classrooms. Four teachers from each of the three primary schools who teach the languages of Sepedi and English were selected for interviews. The languages teachers were selected because their subjects dealt with reading, comprehension and writing which define literacy competence. The sample comprised twelve (12) teachers.

3.3.3 Data collection method

Data collection method is one crucial aspect of a research study as it is a determinant of the success or failure of the research (Neuman, 2006).

Interviews

According to Kvale (1996) the fundamental purpose of the research interview is to listen attentively to what respondents have to say, in order to acquire more knowledge

about the study topic. Interviews present detailed insights on some sensitive topics that interviewees might not have disclose in a group environment (Gill, Steward, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). A particular strength of interviews is that they yield data in considerable quantity quickly and when one person participates the process takes in a wider variety of information than if there were fewer participants as the researcher trades-off between breadth and depth (Marshall& Rossman, 2006).

The study elicited experiences of teachers about teaching literacy competences in overcrowded classrooms in public schools through individual in-depth interviews. Main questions asked were as reflected in the interview schedule. These were followed by probing questions based on the responses of the participants. The follow-up questions were attempting to uncover issues that could have been raised but needed further depth.

3.4 Reliability and validity

For quantitative research the types of reliability relate to the degree to which a measurement given repeatedly remains the same, the stability of a measurement over time and the similarity of measurements within a given time period (Kirk & Miller, 1986). According to Joppe (2000) validity determines if the research truly measures what it is purposed to measure by the researcher. The traditional criteria for validity derive from positivist tradition (Golafshani, 2003). Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002; cited in Ali & Yusof, 2011:31) posit that the concepts of validity and reliability are applicable to all research. They give the reason that the goal of finding plausible and credible results is pertinent to all studies. In the qualitative domain researchers are not worried about replicability (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Terms that are more applicable to qualitative researchers are precision (Winter, 2000), credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability (Hoepf, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and rigour or trustworthiness (Seale, 1999; Davies & Dodd, 2002; Stenbacka, 2001).

The interview guide was pre-run at the school where the researcher is working. This helped in reshaping the questions so that they became more focused. This made the instrument reliable. The participants in the study were teachers who were appointed in their posts by government and as part of their day to day duties involve teaching

languages in overcrowded classrooms. These were experienced teachers with several years of individual experience to their credit. This afforded high level validity for the data collected.

3.5 Trustworthiness

A study is trustworthy if and only if it is so judged by the consumer of the research report (Rolfe, 2006). Guba & Lincoln (1981, as cited in Ali & Yusuf, 2011, p. 30) proposed that the criteria to achieve trustworthiness in qualitative include credibility, fittingness, auditability and confirmability. Over the years trustworthiness has been split into credibility, which is equivalent to the positivist concept of internal validity; dependability, which is equivalent to reliability; transferability, which corresponds to external validity; and confirmability, which is largely an issue of presentation (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, as cited in Rolfe, 2006).

In this study trustworthiness was achieved through the involvement of teachers who were part of the official structures that are set up by the Department of Basic Education. These stakeholders and the responses they gave could be traced.

3.5.1 Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) credibility refers to confidence in the truth of the findings and this is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. Credibility is an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a credible interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original data (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The qualitative investigator's equivalence of internal validity is credibility which deals with the question of how close the results approximate reality (Merriam, 1998, as cited in Shenton).

In this study the individual interviews revealed information which was generally supportive of each other. There was an identifiable trend in all the responses on basic teaching strategies used in the schools. This managed to raise the credibility status of the findings.

3.5.2 Transferability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) transferability is more the responsibility of the person wanting to transfer the findings to another situation or population than that of the researcher of the original study. It is crucial that each phenomenon be adequately described to afford understanding by the reader so that comparisons can be done with other contexts (Shenton, 2004). This study provided sufficient contextual factors that would make it easy for consumers of the findings to transfer them to other similar conditions. The study was conducted in one of the rural areas of the previously disadvantaged black population of South Africa. The children in the research had to be literate in a first and at times a second indigenous language before they became literate in English as a language of instruction. Transferability can be achieved in similar contexts that are found in all rural and urban provinces of South Africa wherever blacks are pursuing studies under the current system of education. The findings indeed can be useful in many countries where the first language is not English but primary students have to be taught in this language. Indeed the findings are transferable wherever the home language differs with the language of instruction at school.

3.5.3 Dependability

According to Morrow (2005) dependability refers to the way the study is conducted and states that the study should be consistent across time. According to Gasson (2004) dependability deals with the core issue that the way prides in consistency in the manner a study is done over time and involving several researchers utilising the same analytical techniques. According to Guba (1981) the concept of dependability implies trackable variability, that is, variability that can be ascribed to identifiable sources.

Dependability was achieved in this study through the fact that all information was received from identifiable sources in the form of teachers in the participating schools.

3.5.4 Confirmability

Wahyuni (2012) refers to confirmability as the extent to which other people are able to vouch for the findings as representing the beliefs and understandings of the participants as opposed to the researcher's preferences. Morrow (2005) asserts that

confirmability is based the general acceptance that research is not objective. According to Morrow (2005) many of the procedures used to accomplish the goal of dependability are also applicable to confirmability, particularly accountability through an audit trail.

The researcher strove to be neutral in this study so that he could capture as much data as was possible to satisfy the study objectives.

3.6 Data analysis procedures

This section gives an overview on how data collected was presented, analysed and interpreted. Bloomberg and Volpe (2007) state that qualitative research begins with questions and to inform the questions the researcher collects data.

Rossman and Rallis (2003) regard data as building blocks that, when grouped into patterns, become information, which when applied or used, become knowledge. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006) data analysis in qualitative research remains somewhat mysterious as there are no formulas for determining the significance of findings or for interpreting them. Bloomberg and Volpe (2007) assert that analysis of data deal with the deconstruction of the findings. Patton (2002) gives his advice that a researcher must exert himself to fairly represent and interpret the data the best they can because there are no rigid rules laid down.

The thematic analysis method was used to analyse the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data. Tables were used to present data for each theme. Direct quotations of responses were done to show their relevance to the research problem. Interpretation and discussion was done alongside each theme so that their relevance could be understood in their proper context.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Since most education research deals with human beings, it is necessary to understand the ethical and legal responsibilities of conducting research (McMillan &Schumacher, 2006). Guba (1990) states three basic ethical principles, namely the principle of mutual

respect, non-coercion and non –manipulation and of support for democratic values and institutions.

Before embarking on the study, the following ethical issues were given necessary attention:

- Seeking permission to conduct research: the researcher sought permission from the Department of Basic Education and the principals of the participating schools to have their teachers as participants in the study. Permission was also sought from individual teachers who participated in the study.
- Avoidance of harm: the researcher made sure that the participants were not harmed emotionally or physically during and after the conduct of the research. Participants were informed beforehand about the significance and potential impact of the study. The information supplied by participants which was confidential was not made available to management for purposes of reprimanding or promoting the participating teachers.
- Voluntary participation and respect: the researcher made sure that participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time if they decided to.
- Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity: as stated in the constitution of Republic of South Africa that everyone has the right to privacy, the researcher ensured that every participant's right to privacy was respected at all times. All the information obtained from the participants was handled in a confidential manner and no hidden apparatus such as videos, cameras and microphones were to be used during interviews. The names of the participants were not revealed.

3.8 Summary of Chapter three

This chapter has provided the research paradigm for the study and the case study design. The type of sample was also discussed amongst other issues that pertain to research methodology and design. Chapter four caters for the data presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave the research methodology and design for the study. This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data collected through face to face with participants regarding the teaching of literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in Mamaila Circuit in the Mopani District. The results of the study are discussed in accordance to the themes that were established in accordance with the aim of the study.

4.2 Biographical data of participants

Table 4.1 presents the results showing gender and number of years of teaching experience of participants. Participating teachers were coded as CS1-Curriculum Specialist level 1 and differentiated from each other by a small letter suffix from CS1a through to CS1h.

Table 4.1: **Biographical data of participants**

Participants' codes	Gender	Number of years teaching in a school	Subject	Grade	Number of learners	Boys	Girls
CS1a	Female	10	Sepedi	4	139	70	69
CS1b	Female	10	Sepedi	6	74	34	40
CS1c	Female	5	English	4	139	70	69
CS1d	Male	22	English	4	51	22	29
CS1e	Female	21	Sepedi	4	51	22	29
CS1f	Male	17	Sepedi	6	78	39	39
CS1g	Female	22	English	6	78	39	39
CS1h	Female	9	Sepedi	4	75	35	40

CS1i	Female	12	English	6	64	38	26
CS1j	Female	15	English	4	75	35	40
CS1k	Male	23	Sepedi	6	64	38	26
CS1l	Male	26	English	6	74	34	40

A total of 8 female teachers and 4 male teachers made up the sample. There were more females teaching literacy skills in the sample than male. The classes involved with the teachers who were interviewed had varied numbers of learners. The class taught by CS1a and CS1c had the highest number of learners, at 139. The recommended class size for primary is 40 pupils per 1 teacher. This means this class of 139 is equivalent to 3.5 classes at the recommended size. Whereas there were supposed to have 4 teachers for each language taught unfortunately this population of learners is being taught by one teacher for each language. The consequences for such a high level of overcrowded classrooms cannot be underestimated. The educators are devoted to their profession. The class is 347.5 % full and the smallest class in the sample had 51 learners which comparatively can be said to be manageable at 127.5 % full. According to UNESCO (2001) an average of 1:43 ratio of teacher-pupil is expected in African countries. The finding agrees with Benbow, Mazrachi, Oliver and Said-Moshiro (2007) who say that classes are regarded as large if the teacher pupil ratios exceed 1:40 and such classes are mostly found in developing countries. The class size of 40 learners is the ideal size, however, the results show a class that is minimally overcrowded with 51 learners and an excessively overcrowded classroom of 139 learners.

The numbers of years of experience of the teachers were also varied, with the smallest number being 5 years and the most experienced teacher having 26 years of teaching experience. Collectively all the teachers who participated in the interviews had a sum of 192 years of experience amongst them. Taping information from a sample with close to two centuries of experience was satisfying to the researcher as this reflected

a body of teachers who should have tried to devise ways of teaching in overcrowded classrooms over a protracted period of time.

4.3 THEME 1: Teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit

The teachers gave their teaching strategy as discussed in this section:

4.3.1 Grouping strategy

There was a common strategy that was being used to deliver lessons by each teacher who was interviewed, that of grouping the learners. The groups were chosen in the following manner:

- Assess the abilities of the learners
- Mix the learners across the range of abilities
- Choose a group leader from the more able category

The choice of learners according to the teachers was meant to achieve an atmosphere that was not discriminatory towards those learners who took longer to comprehend the reading and writing exercises.

Some of the responses on the teaching strategies are given in this section.

CS1a: “We group learners in groups especially when they are reading and writing”.

CS1b: “The teaching strategy that we use is grouping learners so that we can teach them how to read and write. As you see that our learners don’t know how to read and write Sepedi, we also help them in writing explanations of certain words using them as word bank”.

CS1d: “The strategy that I usually use is group work whereby I group learners, 4 to 5 learners. Among them there must be a leader who will guide them. I give them a task all of them. I monitor those groups to see whether they are doing

the work that I gave them. And I make sure that I always tell the group leaders to always guide the other ones because you'll see that the leader is the bright learner than the other learners. You'll see we have the middle learners and the slow learners. I can't say they are slow learners, those with barriers. The task of the leader is to guide those ones. I monitor if there is going to be a presentation the leader is the one who's going to present to me. That is the strategy I use".

The group dynamics help to identify learners who are slow and not confident in reading. Teacher **CS1d** is avoiding the use of 'slow learner' term as this could be taken as a label that might be abused by fellow learners to demean such a group. This may cause stigmatisation that is detrimental to their freedom to learn in a school. This agrees with the finding by Algozzine (2010) that some students do have a low self-esteem once they are given a label. Those identified as having a disability or barrier can begin to doubt themselves. They place themselves at the lower rank in comparison with others feeling that they are not smart.

The task of the group leader is clearly spelt out by teacher **CS1d** as to guide the other group members with learning barriers. This role is clearly belonging to the teacher but because of overcrowded classrooms the grouping strategy delegates that responsibility to a learner who is adjudged to be the most brilliant in the group. The teacher remains with a reduced oversight role in this strategy because in a 51 learners the teacher has to deal with 8 group leaders, where 5 groups will have 6 learners each and 3 groups will have 7 learners each. The group strategy is therefore invariably biased towards shared responsibilities between the teacher and the group leader.

CS1e: "Firstly I must make sure that I group them. I divide these learners into groups so that it must be easier for me to tackle, may be to work with me in these sitting groups. If I use attend to them individually may be some of them may be left out. I group them according to mixed abilities; with different abilities...They'll be group leaders so that they help me to facilitate and to monitor the whole learning process".

CS1g: "The strategy I use is the common strategy which is to group the learners according to mixed abilities".

The mixed-ability groupings done by literacy teachers in Mamaila circuit promoted communicative approach as this is a founding dynamic for group work. This is in line with finding by Imtiaz (2014) who found that on English language teachers should promote communicative approach for language teaching by adopting activity based teaching through the groups. The grouping practice also agrees with the findings of Finn, Pannozo and Achilles (2003) stipulating that learners engaged in smaller classes and groups benefited from a structure in class that was not centralised in the teacher but encouraged social engagement and academic engagement.

CS1f: “The strategies that I’m using, because the class is overcrowded I group them firstly in group where in those groups I will have a group leader or maybe a reporter who will report the findings on what they’ve agreed upon. But this group leader will be able to check each individual member. Each learner in the group will have a turn to take part or maybe to do something in the group so that finally I will be able to get the result. I am able to give them individual work apart from group work so that they can have confidence to work when they are alone. I check all the groups in the class moving around when they are working. From there I tell them I will do random sampling so that I can encourage each and every group they must take part in the lesson that I am teaching”.

The teacher gives some tasks on individual basis. Such tasks also include the writing skills even though these could be difficult to perform in group work. The writing skill may pick up faster in a group than in the whole class comparatively because the group members are capable of encouraging each other. The group leader must be one good at hand writing. Teacher **CS1f** alludes to the point that each learner will have a turn to take part so that there is a result of the group. This aspect of making sure that every group member participates encourages sharing of skills. Teacher **CS1f** also says he tells learners that he will sample randomly any group to bring its result or to present to the whole class. The random sampling makes sure the groups strive towards completion of tasks so that when called to present they may not be found unprepared. This means group members share common concerns so that they achieve as a group.

CS1h: “We grouped them. Then group leaders they assist me in that when I’m moving around I am facilitating as you know that more work must be done by the learners”.

When teacher **CS1h** has given the work to groups she moves from group to group facilitating the learning process. In this way she maintains her position as a teacher because there are instances where she must instruct with the skills that are above the level of a group leader. She can vary the explanation of concepts in a manner the group leader cannot do therefore the facilitation is bound to ensure every learner has grasped concepts being taught for that day.

CS1k: “When teaching synonyms we teach them in Sepedi and also in English, the only problem we have is that those learners are many and you won’t be able to see learners who are able to catch up earlier because we’ve got slow learners, average learners and learners who’ve got an IQ of above 80 %”.

Teacher **CS1k** disclosed that there are some learners in his class who have got IQs that are above 80 %. The study did not find evidence of assessment of IQ at schools under focus. This means the teacher was using the IQ level reference without any tests taken on learners. The teacher has mentioned that when teaching synonyms they teach them in Sepedi and also in English. Here is a situation where the home language gives a basis to synonyms before the learners are introduced to synonyms in English. This result corroborates the finding by Okedara and Okedara (1992) posit that the mother tongue has been shown to be best medium for teaching literacy skills. They contend the same to be true psychologically because it is the system of meaningful signs that works most automatically in one’s mind for the expression and understanding of facts. The result also agrees with the position taken by Gudschinsky (1977) who argues by saying that the teaching of literacy in the mother tongue is a bridge to the acquisition of a second language. Her point of departure is that pedagogically learning must begin with the known and proceed to the unknown.

CS1l: “This is a strategy that we, first of all screen the learners in class according to their ability to read then we compile a list of those who are struggling. Then during the lesson we call those learners to come to the front. We arrange tables, then we give

other learners a task to do, then we call those who are struggling even if we may not call all of them. We just pick from the list but we don't tell them that they are unable to read, we just call them from their different groups to come to the front. Then we read a text which the teacher prepared before. Then we also give those learners a chance to read independently during that lesson. So that is how we try to teach reading”.

The assessing of abilities before grouping is commendable. Without the knowledge on the abilities there would be no basis for grouping the learners. The process would therefore become arbitrary. The advantage of mixing learners of different abilities has obvious benefits that one can enumerate. The slow-to-grasp learners can learn from the ones who are quick to comprehend the lesson. The other teachers reported groups of 5 and 6 learners. The advantage of the small groups is the closeness between the group members. The teachers were able to monitor the work to get feedback.

The setting up of groups finds support from other researchers. Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (2008) agree that small groups are poised for students to maximise their own and each other's learning. The setting up of groups in this study corroborates the finding of Abadzi (1985) which states that in groups of diverse ability and characteristics the students who work in them learn from one another to accomplish common tasks which they are assigned to do. The finding of grouping learners is a contradiction to the finding by Dabo (2015) who found teachers mostly used the lecture method in classrooms that had large number of students. At the same time the findings in the study agree with study the finding by Benbow, Mizrachi, Oliver and Moshiro (2007) that teachers had a difficulty in varying their instructional methods. All the teachers in the study have shown the grouping method to be basic to the teaching of literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms. Remer (2018) in his findings posits that the benefits of group work outweigh the disadvantages since these benefits include increased realisation by the students that they own the subject matter under study. He says the group members can grab the opportunity in which struggling students get help from stronger students as part of group culture.

Besides the grouping method not all teachers put emphasis on the other strategies herein discussed. The following remark by one of the teachers attests to this:

Teacher **CS11** stated that “We just pick from the list but we don't tell them that they are unable to read, we just call them from their different groups to come to the front.”

This approach of not telling them their inabilities through broadcasting in the class prevents labelling that has negative consequences. The method used by the teachers is supported by finding by Samkange (2015) who stated that labels tended to foster differences in children and have a negative impact. Children have often been confused with the labels they get from parents, teachers and caregivers. He adds that some labels are abstract and cannot be understood by the child.

4.3.2 Modelling reading

Some teachers discussed one strategy of story modelling. The teacher models the story as she reads it in class or at assembly for the learners to quickly relate to the meaning of the words. The strategy was also applied in the class groups where the learners were given the stories to read and then they would model them to the whole class as a group. This method was beneficial on at least two fronts. The shy learner could gain confidence to participate in front of the others and grasp words as they act them to others.

CS11: “And we also model the reading. Most of the time we model the reading when there is a story that they have to go through. The teacher reads the story aloud to the learners and they listen. And as the teacher reads sometimes we stop along the way and ask them questions to check their understanding, whether they are following what the teacher is reading. And that will assist us a lot because if they see the teacher modelling the reading they will be motivated in one way or another to read on their own”.

The strategy involved lighter moments when learners laugh not in ridicule but in sheer amusement as the words are shaped by and through actions. The findings by Caddy (2015) which revealed that learners responded positively to reading strategies that encouraged them to become actively involved in the lesson is supported by the finding on modelling strategy used by teachers in the current study.

By modelling stories learners can be brought closer to feeling the encounter or experiences related in the story even though they might have never experienced them outside the classroom. The modelling therefore may closely approximate the finding by Machaba (2013) that learners from low socio-economic schools (SES) require a

variety of experiences to facilitate the natural transition from oral language used at home to functional literate language used in school, moreover these children living in poverty are at risk for learning disorders, and need support. This study established that the schools were classified as low SES because no learner paid school fees and they were provided a full meal at school.

4.3.3 Debate

Debate was mentioned as a strategy by some of the teachers.

CS1f: “A positive learning environment is important. If I involve them in activities such as in grade 6 English trying to create something like debate. I come with motions or we help each other come with motions. They themselves are active. Debating in English, they like it. They write. They like coming up to the front”.

The learners were reported to be keen to debate in English. Those who participated in debate tried to find meaning of some words and write them down so that when they used the new words they could impress their hearers. This agrees with findings of Shaw (2012) that during the debate time pupils sharpen their use of verbal communication and skills to organise their work into logical steps. The keenness by the learners to debate corroborate the findings by Nair and Alwee (2012) that positive qualities of group work have been found to include tolerance, team spirit, giving and taking, establishing a direction in learning, developing imaginative and creative thinking, developing a critical and informed mind, developing an ability and sense of enjoyment in life-long learning. In debate some of these qualities exhibit themselves.

4.3.4 Drilling

One experienced teacher talked of drilling as a strategy he used.

CS1k: “In my class of 65 I use the drilling method. I drill with them although this is effective for learners with IQ of 70 % and above”.

Drilling does not interfere with the close packing of groups around their desks. There is no access to freely negotiate the spaces between the desks because of overcrowding. Thus the advantages of grouping are not always realised because of

unavailable space for teachers to move around in class. Group work does not get priority with this teacher as did the rote learning. Despite some scholars who despise drilling as a teaching and learning method, Swanson and Sachse-Lee (2000) in a meta-analysis of 85 academic intervention studies with students that had learning barriers it was found that in spite of the practical or theoretical orientation of the research, the largest effect sizes were obtained by interventions that included systematic drill, repetition, practice, and review of the learning materials.

4.3.5 Word bank

The teachers mentioned a way of learning new words and pronouncing words correctly by compiling what they called a word bank.

CS1b: “In a booklet the learners would write the words and their meanings which they encountered problems with. I then explain to the learner the meaning of the word and how it is pronounced. The book forms a word bank for the learner”.

CS1i: “Before I teach a new lesson I explain key words which they write in their personal dictionaries”.

The word bank strategy would be to write only words that challenged the learners in meaning and pronunciation. The teacher suggests words for the word bank after assessing how strange the words appeared to the learners. The word bank is not the conventional dictionary. Each learner only compiles those words that posed challenges to him or her. So generally no two word banks can be strictly identical. The use of the word bank prepared learners to use conventional dictionaries in their school life.

4.3.6 Spelling tests

Spelling tests were offered on a weekly basis. The marking activity associated with weekly testing for the teacher is bound to be an overwhelming activity because of overcrowded classrooms. The learners would get involved by peer marking most of the tests.

CS1j: “When learners know how to write it is easy for them to make sentences. As an educator every week you must ensure that there is a spelling test. Spelling test ensures they can read and they don’t have problems in writing their paragraphs”.

The difficult words can be identified through the weekly spelling tests and find their way into the word banks. This was in line with The Department of Education strategy referred to as Spelling Bee which targeted learners in Grade 4 and 6. The strategy was aimed at improving learners’ performance in languages especially in English (DBE, 2015). Spelling Bee is a game in which the participants compete in spelling words orally. The Spelling Bee as a strategy could also be converted for use in literacy teaching for the Sepedi language because it involves spelling words orally. The oral exercises could be used for setting quiz targets between groups of learners to encourage competition for knowing more words than the other group. The teachers in this study have applied spelling tests successfully, complimented by the use of word banks.

4.3.7 Shared and paired reading

After the initial grouping is done there is a further division of the group into reading pairs. The pair is likely to be less frightening to those learners who may find the group too big and intimidating for them. When they build confidence at the pair level they then transfer this to the original group until these learners can present to the whole class with confidence.

CS1d: “The other one whenever there is a reading lesson I make sure that these learners start by reading in groups and after that they read in pairs. When between them they find that one is not confident enough, but when they read in pairs that learner becomes confident. At times there are some words that he is not able to pronounce but when he hears the one I paired him with then he’s able to hear how those words are pronounced”.

Shared reading involved reading in the group, while other members of the group were listening. They could also decide reading together to get used to the words while at the same time those who grasped the skills at a slower pace were benefitting from the group effort. In paired reading the teacher arranged the learners in pairs were they

would share reading one at a time. According to Johnson, Johnson and Smith (2014) groups are characterised by positive interdependence in which each student views that if he or she improves individual performance then this will impact positively on the performance of the whole group.

4.3.8 Independent reading

The other strategy that teachers used in overcrowded classrooms is the independent reading.

CS11:“In grade 6 we use what we call group guided reading. We also use what we call communicative language teaching, shared reading, reading aloud, paired reading and independent reading. I’ll also talk about this group guided reading”.

The independent reading is encouraged when there has been progress in both group and paired reading. This is done to avoid jeering by other learners when the slow learners read. These must gain confidence in group and paired reading first before they attempt reading in front of the classroom.

4.3.9 Reading aloud

Reading aloud is one strategy that the teachers in the study engaged in.

CS1f: “One way we measure effectiveness of our methods is when the learners are able to read to the whole class without fear”.

CS11: “We also use what we call communicative language teaching, shared reading, reading aloud, paired reading and independent reading”.

The strategy to have learners reading aloud is meant to reinforce correct pronunciation, and to give confidence to the learner. This is done while other learners are listening. The teacher controls the class to avoid any jeering that might be motivated by mispronunciation of words or just by different intonation from the reader. The method was being applied at class level as well as at group level. Reading aloud has been known to influence positively attitudes and motivations in learners (Merga, 2014). The use of reading aloud strategy corroborates findings on this strategy that many benefits derive from it which include motivating children to read, and improving

basic literacy comprehension and development (Fox, 2013; Swanson, Vaughn, Wanzek, Petscher, Heckert, Cavanaugh, Kraft, & Tackett, 2011). Further to its efficacy as a teaching strategy the strategy has been linked to related language growth, emergent literacy and reading achievement in early primary school years (Swanson et al. 2012).

4.3.10 Communicative language reading

Communicative language as the term implies must permeate all the experiences that the learners come across.

CS1i: “With regard to communicative reading we encourage them to use English when they are on the premises of the school, even when they want to ask for permission to go to the toilet or whatever we encourage them to use English. We also ask them to read during morning assembly then they read the Bible. They take turns from grades 4, 5, 6 and 7. It depends on the time table on which grade is reading on that particular day. So that is what we normally do”.

A study by Imtiaz (2014) on exploring strategies for English language teaching of Pakistani students in public sector colleges revealed that English language teachers should promote communicative approach for language teaching by adopting activity based teaching. The finding in the current study shows a deep indulgence by teachers in the communicative reading strategy by allowing learners from grade 4 to 7 to handle Bible readings at the assembly rotating according to a set time table. While this is a strategy used outside the classroom I see it as a positive extension to the method being used in the overcrowded classrooms.

4.3.11 Extra-curriculum strategy

Some of the teachers are encouraging their learners to watch TV films that show regularly:

CS1n: “I encourage my learners to watch the soap operas that show on TV and are done in English so as to improve their pronunciation”.

CS1a: “I have asked the pupils to read novels whenever they can to improve their English vocabulary”.

CS1e: “I encourage my students to watch children’s programmes on TV where they are doing programmes in English like Takalani Sesame”.

This corroborates findings by DfES (2003) and Buckingham (1990) that more teachers can work from moving image texts to what is printed at will and in any sequence to improve the learners’ reading skills and responses in both print and film media. The watching of soap operas is good although the selection of the films must be done with parental guidance because there are some that have plenty of slang or street language that does not conform to descent language in both culture and business. The reading at home can be more effective if coupled with parental supervision. The teachers would also need to assess if the learner is getting the understanding they need from the books or soap operas by asking them to relate the stories to them in English so they can encourage them.

4.4 SUB-THEME 1: Regrouping slow learners

The teachers devised a way of regrouping the slow learners for extra tuition.

CS1f: “The grouping helps the teacher to see the learners who are not doing well and do remedial work maybe after school. You can take 30 minutes or maybe 40 minutes after school so that you can take those that are lagging behind”.

CS1h: “Sometimes for slow learners we add more time. We’ve got extra time during after school and before school time. They can come early in the morning and teach them. Even Saturday sometimes we used to teach them”.

CS1i: “As our class is overcrowded, we group them according to their abilities. For slow learners we add more time, early in the morning or afternoon or sometimes we would teach them on Saturdays”.

CS1j: “The group leaders monitor learners who cannot read and they report to me. I then take these slow readers through extra lessons or in a group which I guide from my desk in front”.

The remedial work was done on weekends or after hours or before hours in the morning. The strategy for doing the remedial teaching using groups that were not permanent was useful in that they reduced chances of stigmatisation by the other more able learners. The teachers were happy with that arrangement. This finding corroborates that by Van Kraayenoord and Paris (1994) who observed teachers of year 3 and 4 classes in Australian primary schools and noted that sometimes teachers were giving instruction to the entire class but that at other times they devoted time for teaching small groups or individuals who experienced barriers

The constituting of groups as the need arose prevents formation of permanent groups of poor performers. This reduces chances of affecting the learners psychologically who may think they never would be able to move out of the bracket of poor readers or writers. This may lead to a situation referred to as self-fulfilling prophecy. Merton originally defined the term self-fulfilling prophecy as follows: "A false definition of the situation evoking a new behaviour which makes the originally false conception come true" (Merton, 1968: 477). Thus the learners who need the remedial work must be treated without disdain.

Teacher CS1j was able to reconstitute a group of slow learners which she could handle depending on the lesson around her desk. The researcher found this to be crucial in that the remedial emphasis was done in class alongside others. This does not isolate the learners but that they felt they were having the best group handled by the teacher herself. This is in line with the findings of Tomlimson (2001) that Differentiated Instruction (DI) is an approach that recognises the strengths and weaknesses of diverse learners and calls upon the teacher to tailor their instruction around these. This is also supported by Tricarico and Yendol-Hoppey (2012) who posit that DI does not disadvantage one category of learners over the other but allows learners to occupy their appropriate place on the ability continuum because it allows a teacher to meet the varied needs of all students.

4.5 SUB-THEME 2: Setting groups in an overcrowded classroom

While the use of groups was popular with the participants of this study the actual process of setting the groups in overcrowded classes was not easy as one teacher alluded to this:

CS1c: “In most cases we group them, though it is a little bit difficult to group them in an overcrowded classroom...The grouping of learners helps me to see which learners are having problems in the reading and writing of the language”.

The teacher quoted above has alluded to the fact that it is difficult to set groups in an overcrowded classroom. The physical space is limited. Nakabugo et al (2006) also found that it was difficult to reach out and interact with all learners in an overcrowded classroom with movements restricted mostly to the front zone. And the groups may exist on paper only while physically there are squashed without defined boundaries on the floor. Let us take the case of the class of 139 learners. This class use the hall for a classroom. Groups of 14 learners each would amount to ten large groups from this class. Fitting them physically in one class would be extremely difficult. The finding by Barret (2007:288) is corroborated which says “Equality of opportunity broke down in oversized classes, even when taught by teachers who strove to be fair and get to know the pupils in their class.”

4.6 SUB-THEME 3: Monitoring of group work by group leaders

The assembling of learners into groups invariably was associated with the choosing of group leaders:

CS1d: “Among them there must be a leader who will guide them...And I make sure that I always tell the group leaders to always guide the other ones because you’ll see that the leader is the bright learner and the other learners”.

CS1f:“The strategies that I’m using, because the class is overcrowded ...I will have a group leader or maybe a reporter who will report the findings on what they’ve agreed upon. But this group leader will be able to check each individual member”.

CS1e:“They’ll be group leaders so that they help me to facilitate and to monitor the whole learning process”.

The grouping strategy involves choosing a group leader who naturally would be one of those adjudged to be “brilliant”. The other side of looking at the group leader and his circumstances could be as follows. The teacher by appointing a group leader had also appointed an assistant teacher. The teacher gives the group leaders work that

they are to do in their groups. Thus the group leaders become a privileged lot in the classroom. They take away some of the workload from the teacher. Rather the teacher offloads some of his or her workload over to the group leader. This could be interpreted as child abuse as regards the group leaders. The group leaders may enjoy their responsibilities as they have the opportunity to feel like teachers themselves. They could be enjoying the delegated authority over their peers. In the process they could be benefitting more than the other group members, apart from abusing in turn those powers they are given to help the other group members. The strategy of grouping learners may thus be abused if teachers overload group leaders with work and responsibilities.

4.7 Success of the strategies

The teachers were asked whether the strategies they used were successful or not:

CS1c: “The strategies seem to be successful because most of the learners are now able to read and write. When we do the assessment the learners do pass. Some learners have a tendency to hide because the class is overcrowded, and so the groups are helping in this regard”.

CS1f: “The strategies are working...You see in an overcrowded class if you’re an ignorant teacher there are some learners who hide and you’ll never see them even for the whole quarter or semester. They will end up doing nothing”.

The tendency of shying away and not participating when classes are overcrowded corroborates the research findings by Kambuga (2013) and Barret (2007) on overcrowded classrooms.

CS1b: “Yes the strategies have been successful as you can see that the other learners are able to read and write Sepedi and able to read”.

CS1d: “They have been successful a lot, because I see a difference from the first term to the second term and to the third term. The pass rate improves as the year goes”.

CS1f: “Yes they are successful because this is evident when I can see the progress of the learner. It’s not reading only there are also grammars. I check twice a week and

when I'm doing the assessment these learners are doing a wonderful work. Initially the other learners were lagging behind have improved. You see the programme by the government which says the learner must not repeat a phase twice or thrice these have an impact on us. Those learners who were having barriers I can see they are having improved work as they do not want to repeat”.

CS1g: “Yes they are but there are challenges in the strategies. And the challenges being most of these learners because with English there is a great influence of home language, meaning most of them when they write they've got a great influence of the home language. Even when they speak they speak English in an African way. The strategy has been successful because after every assessment I can see an improvement. They can do something new”.

These results are consistent with findings Gudschinky (1977) who argues that the teaching of literacy in the mother tongue is a bridge to the acquisition of a second language. Pedagogically learning must begin with the known and proceed to the unknown. According to Wagner, Spratt and Ezzaki (1989) the transfer of literacy takes place in spite of the lack of similarity of the scripts of the two languages because it is due to the decoding skills developed on the first-language literacy experience. Therefore the learners should have a great influence of Sepedi in their English ventures because the mother tongue is their foundational language.

All the teachers acknowledged the success of the grouping system. That was the most used by every teacher in the sample. The overcrowded classrooms had physical or structural limitations that restricted the movement of the teacher. The teachers resorted to coaching the group leaders first and then asking them to take the work to their groups. The teachers were asked how they measured success of the programme and they showed this by keeping the numbers of learners from first term who could not cope with speaking, reading and writing of the English or Sepedi and comparing the rise or fall of these numbers. Teachers reported a decline in the initial numbers of learners who cannot cope with their class work. One teacher of English at the beginning of term one this year, 2018, had 30 out of 75 learners who had challenges in reading and writing. This number reduced to 17 at the beginning of term two, and

to 10 at the beginning of term three. She was confident that by the end of term four there would be no learner. The expected performance for end of term 4 is that all learners should be in a position to read and write English as expected by grade 4 curriculum.

The teachers expressed satisfaction with the decreasing numbers of learners who experienced literacy challenges at the beginning of the year as the numbers progressively declined with each term passing by. The trend of results shown in Figure 4.3 of reduction in numbers of learners with problems in reading follows the recommendation in the study by Castro (2014, cited in Barrow and Markman-Pithers, 2016) that it is necessary to have that frequent assessments in both a child's first and second language were necessary in order to adapt instruction to the child's development levels of language proficiency. He found that use of focused, small group activities gave children opportunities to respond to questions and receive more individualised instruction which promoted socio-emotional development by creating positive teacher-student relationships and at the same time improved peer interactions. The study corroborates the recommendation in that the Mamaila teachers who are using groups and reading in pairs to facilitate peer interactions that benefit the learners.

Smaller groups have yielded positive results in terms of literacy skills. Other studies have also provided empirical evidence on the benefits and positive effects of implementing group work in the classroom (Nair & Alwee, 2012; Tuan & Nhu, 2010; Genesee, 1994). Social skills are bound to improve in interactions that are cultured within a group environment. Nair and Alwee (2012) posit that desirable qualities resulting from group work include but are not limited to the spirit of tolerance, team work and developing imaginative and creative thinking.

The delay in catching up in English literacy was attributed by two teachers to the mother tongue. They reckoned that Sepedi influenced these learners by way of the thought process that was shown through sentence construction while writing or speaking. The researcher was not surprised since the curriculum stipulated that the

foundational phase must be taught in the mother tongue only. This means moving to a second language can be an uphill task.

4.8 Effectiveness of the strategies

The teachers were asked on the effectiveness of the strategies in use. Their narratives on effectiveness of the teaching strategies are as follows:

CS1a: “The strategy is effective. When we are doing the assessment the learners are able to write the tests on their own and they are also able to do the homework and their class work. They are able to read”.

CS1d: “They are very effective because I’ve seen some improvement. Those learners have improved a lot especially the learners with the barriers, they have improved a lot. We’ve got beautiful learners but unable to read. Most of them have improved because they are helped by the learners who are bright”.

CS1g: “It is effective this strategy because I can see developments, they are developing, they are knowledgeable, their skills are really developing. There is great progress through these skills”.

CS1i: “The grouping method is effective. The list of learners who had reading problems is reducing in numbers. The learners are now able to come and borrow books for reading. In 2016 all the 59 learners in grade 6 passed the English”.

The results given by **CS1i** are proof that the teaching strategies in use are effective. An effective strategy must deliver what it was intended to deliver. A strategy for writing must result in learners being able to write with understanding by the end of each term. An effective strategy for reading must result in poor readers being able to read. The teachers assessed these skills on a weekly basis and generally found the learners improving. The teachers also gauged interest in reading by the increasing numbers of learners who volunteered to come and borrow books for reading purposes. The teachers also kept the record so they could assist those learners who could not read for enjoyment as was intended.

Teacher **CS1d** remarks that they have beautiful learners but who cannot read. This assertion echoes findings by Progress International National Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (2006) which is an assessment of reading comprehension of learners in the intermediate phase was administered to South African learners in Grades 4 and 5. Of the forty five participating countries, South Africa was placed last with a score of 302 with benchmark of 400 being the cut off point for low achievers (Naidoo et al, 2014).

Another way of showing that their teaching method of guided group reading was effective, according to one teacher, was that their learners won competitions against learners from schools that had no overcrowding and had better resources for both teachers and learners. The following remark by one teacher is pertinent:

CS1f: “Our learners are doing well in competitions with schools that are well-resourced and without overcrowding. They beat them in competitions”

The overcrowded schools are using their performances against teams from schools that do not suffer from overcrowding as a benchmark for effective classroom literacy teaching strategy. They beat them in competitions like debates and Spelling Bee. This is commendable as the teachers are able to get the motivation to stick to effective teaching strategies. This finding is in line with the proposal by Naidoo et al., (2014) that the strategies that assist learners to be able to read speedily and efficiently should encompass previewing, predicting, skimming and scanning, guessing through applying prior knowledge and paraphrasing. The teachers in this study seem to have enabled learners to manage to reading through the distribution of teaching responsibilities through group leadership amongst learners who were adjudged to be in the high-ability category.

CS1c: “The learners at the grouping stage are ranked in categories of high, middle and low abilities. I have seen the method to be effective because the learners in the low-ability category strive to move up the ladder. So it is with those in the middle-ability category. By keeping the numbers of learners I have seen these categories reducing in numbers as all the learners aim to get to the high-ability category”.

At group level the learners strive to acquire missing skills in their reading and writing. For fear of being labelled negatively the group has become a tool where learning can take place without attention from the whole class, especially for those that have barriers. A study by Castro (2014, cited in Barrow and Markman-Pithers, 2016) has recommended frequent assessments in the first and second language of a learner in order to adapt teaching strategy to the child's development levels of language proficiency. He posited that use of focused, small group activities enable children opportunities to answer questions and develop self-confidence in themselves coupled with language proficiency.

4.9 Special needs learners

There were other learners who were exceptional, not in improved performance but in failing to cope with all the strategies that the teacher would use. There teachers identified some learners they referred to as less gifted. These learners could not improve in their reading or writing despite the strategy used. Not all classes had such learners but in three classes where they were found the teachers lamented the absence of special needs schools or the lack of intervention by psychologists from the department of education. These learners could not be classified as learners who resisted the strategies that were in place but that they did not possess the cognitive abilities to understand the immediate world surrounding them.

CS1e:“The less gifted children require intervention by educational psychologists which are not availed to our learners at the primary school. We do not have such schools that can look after these children. So they are just moved to the next grades, may be after repeating once or twice in a phase. There are some learners who are in grade 4 who have reading problems or learning barriers. We give them remedial lessons with reading materials from the Foundation Phase, that is, work from grades 2 and 3 which we adjudge that they missed”.

The findings by Combrinck, Staden and Roux (2014) indicate there were teachers who ignored teaching some reading skills at the beginning of the foundation phase in grade 1 and only introduced them in grade 3. This would therefore mean that some of the learners could be declared less gifted when they actually do not fall into this category but that they were not taught the literacy skills at the appropriate stage.

CS1f:“The strategies are effective, although not hundred percent effective because there are those learners whom you can see he or she has got a problem at home through truancy or sickness or any family matter...you see they’re absent from lesson. You try to involve the child but you can see this learner has got a problem. That’s why I said it would not be hundred percent effective because there are those learners who are less gifted in the classroom. Even if you can do all the strategies, apply all the methods, they can fail because this is how they are. They are less gifted, some of them to the level that they need a psychologist, they are not suitable to our environment...Let me just say in my classroom they are learners with special needs, that need special attention more than what we have in our school. We do have some of the resources but they fail to capture them because they belong somewhere where they deal with learners with special needs. That is why we cannot produce one hundred percent passes. That is the reason why our lesson cannot be effectively one hundred percent. That is how I can explain it. The other thing those that have learning barriers, if I discover learners with learning barriers, I try to group them. Even at the end of each term I check at the performances, analyse them, write down their names so that after school or during the weekends or whenever I may have time I call them in groups and then give them. They are in grade 4 right now but I take Foundation Phase readers and I distribute to them so that they must start with sounds.... Those grade 4 materials sometimes they are difficult for them because they’ve got barriers. So I do remedial lessons taking the Foundation phase material”.

The remedial reading and writing for intermediate phase involved use of materials from the foundation phase. This allowed the learners to go back to materials they did not understand in Grades 3 and below. The remedial teaching had to be done within its own time to avoid giving different sets of work in any particular group. I found wisdom in this approach as it would have been demeaning for grade 4 learners to be reading material for grade 2 in a grade 4 group reading lesson.

The other way some teachers managed slow readers was to form a group around the teacher then they read with the teacher during the lesson time while others would be reading in the conventional groups. However, this was helpful because the teacher could read with them in the absence of usual group members. Reading with them

together as a group around the teacher's table these learners would develop confidence as time went by until such a time they were integrated into their normal group. Unlike the finding by Khan and Iqbal (2012) in a study conducted in Pakistan who found that teachers were facing the problem of paying attention to each and every learner in overcrowded classroom and could not spare time to provide extra help to weak learners, this study has revealed the teachers in Mamaila Circuit were able to isolate poor learners and to offer them extra lessons. This finding also confirms findings in a study by Sandholtz (2011) which underscored that teachers engage in reflective practice focused on student learning. He says further in the case of complex and particular situations the teachers have to analyse each distinct situation and come up with context-specific approaches that best can address the learning situation. This study has established that teachers in overcrowded classrooms were able to diagnose and identify learners with barriers who then were given special attention. The finding that the teachers in this study accommodated remedial teaching within the class set up without removing the special needs learners during lesson time contradicts the finding by Petreñas, Puigdelívol and Campdepadrós (2013) who studied practices in Spanish schools and found a practice they refer to as "exclusionary" in which teaching of the learners with barriers was done outside or separate from the rest of the class. As a consequence the families with learners in the Spanish schools thought that the instrumental teaching hours was counterproductive because the special needs learners lost track of those subjects.

4.10 Recommended strategy for teaching literacy in overcrowded classrooms

The teachers were asked what they would recommend as the best strategy for schools that have the problem of overcrowded classrooms. Guided grouping of learners was the most recommended. The learners were screened through reading activities in which they identified those learners with reading difficulties. The learners were then grouped mixed together so the able readers could help those who were poor readers. They listed the advantages that included using group leaders to disseminate information to their groups while they performed monitoring and interventionist roles. One teacher had this to say about the grouping method:

CS11: "In the study groups they assist one another to read. If we constitute reading groups learners would be able to teach one another how to read. Perhaps you find that

may be they can learn better when they are taught by their peers than by the teacher. They can understand their peers more than their educators. So I think that strategy can also work. This method can work because in an overcrowded classroom you don't have the opportunity to check all the learners, to pay attention to all the learners due to that overcrowding".

The assertion that the learners can understand their peers better than when they are taught by their educator, is a challenge to the work of the teacher. The precaution has to be taken in this strategy that the teacher does not abdicate his role in favour of the group peers. The class may be overcrowded but the teacher must not overload the group leaders.

CS1i: "The best method to use in overcrowded classrooms is the group guided reading followed by the communicative language teaching".

While the group guided reading was popular given the results it yielded the researcher noticed one disadvantage of the group method when there is no rotational group leadership. The group leadership must rotate so as to dispense equity in fairness to all group members. The brightest cannot have the group leadership role reserved for them. When the other members have improved in their reading and writing abilities they should be given the chance to become group leaders also. That way they can be able to share knowledge knowing that if a member does not cooperate with the group leader their turn to become a group leader would be coming and they may face the same crisis they are fomenting.

CS1c: "Although it is difficult for me to teach in an overcrowded class what works for me is listening and speaking with resources. For grade 4 learners when they have the resources they can relate to what they are reading".

Teacher **CS1c** is stressing the need for resources in the strategies which she refers to simply as listening and speaking.

The other strategy proffered by teachers is communicative language teaching. Emphasis is placed on communication skills through functional writing and speaking in English only during the lesson or Sepedi only during its lesson.

4.11 Other methods that can be used beside the group method

The teachers were able to suggest different methods they feel can be used in teaching in overcrowded classrooms.

CS1a:“The other strategies that can be used is that the teacher can read the books for learners and let the learners read after the teacher read something from the book...because the teacher will be able to identify those learners who are unable to write and unable to read if he /she reads and then learners read after the teacher”.

The suggestion proffered here may not be easily feasible to pick a learner from an overcrowded classroom that may not be able to follow the teacher in reading along. The sheer numbers could make it impossible to see those with poor reading skills unless they are in groups or other learners nearby could be used to identify their neighbours if they cannot read properly.

CS1b:“As I have said the other strategies that can be used especially in Sepedi is by writing the words that those learners cannot read and write as our learners cannot read and write Sepedi, we write those words on the chalkboard used as words bank or a sort of dictionary. Let the learners write them at the back of their note books”.

CS1c: “Although it is so difficult to teach in overcrowded class, but sometimes what works for me is listening and speaking, of course with resources because learners they learn better when they see especially grade 4, they learn better when they see that which you’re talking about, so the listening and speaking is very interesting for them, they learn better, they relate”.

CS1i: “In teaching literacy, apart from these strategies I think that one other strategy could be that learners form groups, the study groups. And in those study groups they assist one another to read. So I mean, reading groups. If we constitute reading groups learners would be able to teach one another how to read. Perhaps you find that may

be they can learn better when they are taught by their peers than by the teacher. May be they can understand their peers more than their educators. So I think that strategy can also work”.

The strategy recommended here brings in a different dimension in that the reading groups are formed by the learners themselves. These would be different to the teacher-initiated groups that are set in class. In this instance the learners could group along lines of friendship or closeness of their house locations so that they can constitute themselves even at home into a group. The only disadvantage could be for those learners who fail to get into a group for any reason. If the teacher assists to find a group for a learner when others easily get into a group there is a possibility of labelling that can be done on that odd learner.

4.12 Measures that must be taken to improve teaching of literacy

Teachers shared with the researcher what they perceived to be necessary to enhance the teaching of literacy skills in overcrowded classrooms.

4.12.1 Divide classes

CS1d: “The division of classes into two is one solution that can solve the problem of large classes”.

The division was dependent on other factors. If there were no additional teachers appointed by the department then the same teacher would have to teach class A as well as class B in sequence. The result would be that this teacher would perform a double shift of work which would invite protest from the labour union. The other consequence of dividing the class is that the teacher would teach class A for a short time, give them work, after that then sneak into class B to teach and give them work also. The problem would be compromising in quality of teaching. The presence of the teacher is a prerequisite at these lower grades of school.

4.12.2 Provision of study materials

CS1c: “There is a slow delivery of learning materials like books which can even be done after learners have finished term 1 and are in term 2. Even the grouping of learners is not effective when there are study materials”.

There is need for materials to be delivered on time. Some schools had gone for the whole first term without receiving reading and writing materials. For literacy teaching these materials are absolutely necessary otherwise there would no effective teaching. The teachers resorted to devising their own materials from personal resources. They made charts for reading exercises until they received materials from the department.

4.12.3 Hiring of more teachers

CS1f: “There is a serious shortage of teachers who could address the problem of overcrowding in classrooms if they are hired. However, the government has threatened to reduce the number of teachers in efforts to cut the civil service employees”.

There is a dire need for teachers to be employed by the department of education but the teachers interviewed have disclosed that the government is threatening to reduce the number of teachers currently employed. This means the solution to overcrowding will be perpetuated for the foreseeable future.

4.12.4 Construction of more classrooms

CS1i: “New structures must be erected to alleviate overcrowding”.

Provision of more classrooms is part of the solutions to solve literacy problems in schools as this would make it possible to have the correct numbers of learners in each room. This will have an impact on the strategies the teachers use in teaching. Less teacher pupil ratio means the teacher can afford more contact time with the learners than what currently prevails in overcrowded classrooms.

4.12.5 Inspection by parents

CS1h: “Parents must be called to help the learners and to inspect the work of their children”.

Some teachers have suggested that parents must be allowed to come and inspect their child's work. In fact if this is not the current practice then the administration should be accountable. There are days that must be set for parents to come and see their children's books. Some do these on what they call consultation days. Learners are usually prepared to do their work once they know that parents will come to see the books at school.

4.12.6 Sharing ideas with parents who are teachers

The idea of sharing professional ideas with parents was suggested by one teacher.

CS1i: "There are parents now who are well educated and with learners attending our school. These parents should be allowed to share ideas with us on how to teach especially in the overcrowded classrooms".

There are parents who know how to teach and these can be useful in finding ways of helping the literacy teachers with ideas in such conditions of overcrowded classrooms. This suggestion from teacher CS1i is in line with a finding by Nyama (2010:23) that parental involvement is "a dynamic process whereby teachers and parents work together for the ultimate benefit of the learner." There is a possibility of knowledgeable parents to come in with ideas that can help to inform new strategies.

4.12.7 Teachers discussing strategies amongst themselves

One teacher mentioned how they conduct their own training sessions as literacy teachers in the school.

CS1j: "Yes we just gather together every week. We show each other how to deal with the learners. We mustn't use mother tongue while teaching these languages because learners will get used to it, we must speak English so that they get used to it. They must know how to speak English, how to write it. And even when they play games they must use English".

These sessions are done weekly and therefore are very accurate in dealing with challenges arising from the practical side of delivering lessons.

4.13 Summary of teacher responses

The findings of the study have been placed in Table 4. 2.

Table 4.1: Data provided by participating teachers

Teacher	Class size	Language and grade	Strategies	Successful or not	Evidence of Effectiveness	Other strategies recommended by teachers for effective teaching
CS1a	139	Sepedi Grade 4	Grouping	Yes	Learners passing assessment tests. Able to read & write homework	Reading books with learners reading after the teacher
CS1b	74	Sepedi Grade 6	Grouping	Yes	Number of remedial learners reducing	Write and explain difficult words and create a word bank for learners
CS1c	139	English Grade 4	Grouping	Yes	Learners move from low-ability to middle and high ability categories.	Listening and speaking when resources are available.

CS1d	51	English Grade 4	Grouping	Yes	Number of learners with barriers has reduced	Shared reading Independent reading
CS1e	51	Sepedi Grade 4	Grouping	Yes	Number of learners with barriers has reduced	Field study for learners to see what they are learning Teach learners with barriers using foundation phase materials
CS1f	78	Sepedi Grade 6	Grouping	Yes	Competing and beating teams from schools that have resources and without overcrowded classrooms	Group work with peer assessment
CS1g	78	English Grade 6	Grouping	Yes	Reading and writing skills developing. Oral and written assessments show improvements	Give work everyday Creative and functional writing Drop all and read
CS1h	75	Sepedi Grade 4			40 learners failed in Term 1 and 20 failed in term 2. Expects the number to	Watch TV to improve in English

			Grouping	Yes	decrease in term 3.	
CS1i	64	English Grade 6	Grouping	Yes	More learners able to read stories	Afternoon lessons Teach learners with barriers
CS1j	75	English Grade 4	Grouping	Yes	30 learners could not read in term 1 and by term 3 the number had reduced considerably.	Reading everyday
CS1k	64	Sepedi Grade 6	Grouping	Yes	Effective for learners with IQ of over 70 %	Remedial lessons for learners with barriers
CS1l	74	English Grade 6	Grouping	Yes	Learners able to borrow books for reading. Vocabulary has improved. List of learners with reading problems reducing in number.	Communicative language Reading groups Peer teaching

4.14 Chapter summary

The chapter has presented the data that was collected in interviews and the interpretation and discussion by the researcher. The prominent themes have been the teaching strategies in overcrowded classrooms, the effectiveness of these methods, the strategies recommended by the teachers for use by those who find themselves in

similar conditions and how the strategies can be supported to alleviate the problems that obtain in overcrowded classrooms. The next chapter will present findings and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In chapter 4 data were presented, analysed and interpreted through discussion of each theme. This chapter discusses the summary and findings of the study. Based on the findings recommendations have been made. The chapter has provided suggestions for future research.

5.2 Summary of study

This chapter introduced the whole study which was conducted in Mamaila Circuit under Mopani District. The main focus of the study was on strategies that the literacy teachers in primary schools were using to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms. The literacy teachers comprised a sample of twelve teachers who taught Sepedi as the Home Language and English as an additional language in grades four and six. The study was located in the interpretivism paradigm. The researcher conducted twelve in-depth interviews with teachers using an interview guide. The teachers were based on three primary schools in the circuit. Data obtained were presented and analysed according to themes that were derived from the research objectives and questions. The findings, recommendations and suggestions for further study are given in this chapter.

The biographical data of participants is reproduced in the Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 **Biographical data of participants**

Participants' codes	Gender	Number of years teaching in a school
CS1a	Female	10
CS1b	Female	10

CS1c	Female	5
CS1d	Male	22
CS1e	Female	21
CS1f	Male	17
CS1g	Female	22
CS1h	Female	9
CS1i	Female	12
CS1j	Female	15
CS1k	Male	23
CS1l	Male	26

Eight female and four male teachers, with a combined 192 years of teaching experience amongst them, participated in the study through interviews conducted onsite by the researcher.

5.3 Conclusion of the study

The study found that all the teachers had a common strategy of grouping learners in mixed-ability groups. On each group the one assessed to be 'most' brilliant of them all would become the group leader. The teacher then delegated the work to the group leader who disseminated the information to the other group members. The teacher would then check on the groups for any problems arising from the work given. The conclusion is in agreement with findings from previous studies. Kraayenoord and Paris (1994) found that lower primary literacy teachers in Australia used grouping method in which they became facilitators while the learners carried out tasks that improved their own reading and writing. Tuan and Nhu (2010) found that group work with their peers exposed the pupils to opportunities to develop and enhance both social and intellectual skills. The appointing of a group leader afforded that individual to develop negotiation skills with group members who also learned to accommodate each other's views in give-and-take conversations. This study corroborated the findings that such interactions brought about the acquisition of new reading and writing skills.

Slow learners were regrouped and given extra lessons before school classes, or after school-out. Some teachers called the identified learners, during lesson time, to their table and formed a group that they would instruct themselves on the challenges they encountered. This conclusion is in line with the recommendation of the Department of Education strategy discussed earlier on as the National Reading Strategy (NRS) which aims to improve the reading competences of all learners in the country, including those who experience barriers to learning and learners who are at special school and youth centre (DoE, 2008). The regrouped learners found ample time to acquire necessary skills. The bringing of learners to the front for special interaction with the teacher is also in line with findings by Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) that the EGRA thrust is noble indeed because it provides for instruction to be tailored around deficiencies in reading skills. At the same time the tact used by the teacher in class is interpreted as fulfilling the desire of government in responding to the needs of the child at different levels with appropriate tailor-made responses. Sarwar and Mian (2016) found that use of group work is a tried and tested option that language teachers should bring on board in their classes. They found that it meets the needs of the students and reduces those problems of discipline control, individual attention and assessment associated with large classes. The regrouping of learners with reading and writing barriers is in line with the finding of Hay, Elias and Booker (2005) who posit that teachers should be in a position to select and implement suitable interventions for student that show persistent problems in engaging with texts in a number of ways.

The teacher modelled the story as he or she read it in class or at assembly for the learners to quickly relate to the meaning of the words. This facilitated the contextual understanding of the story by the learners. The strategy was also applied in the class groups where the learners were given the stories to read and then they would model them to the whole class as a group. The modelling strategy is in agreement with the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model explained by Pearson and Gallagher (1983). In this model the teachers aptly demonstrates and explains the reading strategies together with the writing processes the learners are intended to acquire. The teacher thinks aloud by mentioning the intricacies of a passage to be read or words to be written.

The teachers in the study utilised shared reading which involved learners taking turns to read in the group while other members of the group were listening. The same went for paired reading. This conclusion confirms strategies proffered by UNESCO (n.d.) which recommended shared reading as an interactive process of reading that must be engaged by the whole class. Children participate in the process by reading key words and phrases they know, while the teacher instructs by reading them aloud. This agrees with Vukelich, Christie and Enz (2008) who posit that shared reading is a whole class reading activity in which the teacher and learners read together. They found that this reading strategy expands opportunities for teachers to introduce comprehension passages to gauge the pupils' abilities in grasping content. At the same time the teacher is able to exert control over the pupils by dictating the reading pace and discuss meanings of words encountered.

The teachers encouraged independent reading with the learners after they had made progress in both group and paired reading. Independent reading involved students not only read books. They also read all the written materials in the classroom which included wall charts. UNESCO (n.d.) states that children need access to books and time at their disposal to read the appropriate texts for themselves. It recommends each classroom to have a corner where learners can sit and read books. In other words there must be a library corner so learners can indulge in text reading. UNESCO posits that reading materials in abundance encourage children to practise the reading habit. Independent reading promotes fluency and challenges students to become independent problem solvers. The experience from this study was that there were no reading corners as the classrooms were overcrowded. Thus the learners could request books, in form of novels, from the teacher for reading within the class and at home.

The teachers also employed the strategy to have learners reading aloud. This was meant to reinforce correct pronunciation, and to give confidence to the learner. This agrees with the finding by Kalb and Van Ours (2014) who posited that reading aloud as a teaching strategy has been found to be a critical factor in the development of

literacy skills in pre- and primary pupils. One experienced teacher talked of drilling as a strategy he used. He said that drilling did not interfere with the close packing of groups around their desks. This corroborates findings by Tica (2004) that languages benefit from the drilling method as it eliminates problems related to pronunciation and aids in the memorising of both small and large portions of the language under study. The method can be utilised in normal sized or overcrowded classrooms with realisation of tangible benefits as learners quickly catch the pronunciation of words and grasp both meaning and spelling relatively over a short period of time.

The learners were keen to debate in English. Debate encouraged the learners to search for words in their dictionaries and to write their speeches. Tessier (2009) says that debate is superior to other teaching methods because it helps those participating to be able to develop their own viewpoints. Small group debates are simple to implement, well received and enjoyed by students and are of benefit to both debating students and listeners. Learners who enjoy debating in the short run gain skills for remembering material apart from other skills needed in life (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006).

The teachers mentioned a way of learning new words and pronouncing words correctly by learners compiling what they called a word bank. The learner only put words that were new and difficult in meaning and pronunciation in their personal word bank. Medwell, Wray, Poulson and Fox (1998) found that effective teachers of literacy were very specific about literacy activities at the whole text, word and sentence levels and that these brought out the meaning that is created. The emphasis on the word is supported by the personal word bank used by the teachers in this study.

There was a common use of the communicative reading strategy by teachers in allowing learners from grades 4 to 7 to handle Bible readings at the assembly rotating according to a set time table. This method encouraged practice in class before they presented on the school assembly. This strategy encouraged learners to speak only English during English lessons and Sepedi only during Sepedi lessons so that they

could improve communication amongst themselves in each language. These activities are similar to what Griffith and Ruan (2007) referred to as story innovation. In this strategy the teacher determines the way a story can be innovated and then familiarises the pupils with a given sentence and section in the story which can be innovated. The process benefits learners as it develops their vocabulary around that particular topic which later will be used in story innovation.

Teachers encouraged the learners to watch children's programmes on TV when they are showing programmes in English like Takalani Sesame. They also encouraged them to watch soap operas in English. The use of TV or film corroborates Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2003) which has promoted the use of film or moving image as a strategy for teaching literacy. It argues that the essential aspect of film or TV is the incorporation of this media into the learning experience of primary school children. The department emphasizes the vital importance of active learning, the advantage of linking home and school, the deepening of level of understanding texts in context, and a quicker way of understanding culture and society from the screen.

5.4 Recommendations on teaching literacy strategies

The study recommends improvements on teaching strategies. The mixed-ability grouping of learners must be accompanied with rotational group leadership. Once other learners improve on their skills they must be given the opportunity to become group leaders. This way they can develop all group members and remove permanent group leadership to individual learners. The 'brilliant' group leaders should not think they are entitled to the position as this may bring resentment from other group members which could lead to a poor learning environment.

The grouping of slow learners in front to form an impromptu group by the teacher should also involve some learners deemed to be fast learners to give a mixed complexion that will not attract negative labelling by the rest of the class. Paired reading needs to be arranged by the teacher to avoid 'friends' always choosing each

other on whatever basis like that of fast readers or other criteria. The criteria must include mutual benefit for both members in a pair.

Communicative language reading should be done in both English and Sepedi especially during Bible reading at the school assembly. Extra-curriculum strategy of watching soap operas should be extended to the classroom situation. The teacher can have episodes recorded prior to watching these with the learners under the guidance of the teacher. Recording these soapies or buying videos and using them in class helps on rewinding and replaying to allow emphasis and clarification where the teacher deems necessary.

The grouping method has been roundly appraised as effective by the teachers. The grouping method as it were was the basis of other strategies. In other words from the group level the teacher could draw children into paired readers. The effectiveness was measured by teachers through the reduction of numbers of learners who were unable to read during the first term compared to the subsequent terms. Effectiveness was also measured by competitiveness of debating teams with teams that were derived from schools that did not have overcrowded classrooms. The borrowing of reading books from the teacher by learners was interpreted to mean effectiveness of the teaching strategies.

There were learners who did not benefit remarkably on any of the strategies. These were the learners with learning barriers. This group remained largely unattended to because of the unavailability of education psychologists at school, circuit and district levels. The establishment of personal word dictionaries positively influenced correct spelling of words. Reading aloud strategy instilled confidence in learners and perfected reading and pronunciation skills

Tshiunza, Shilongo and Bina (2017) in their studies found that methods or strategies for teaching and reading are dependent on the professional abilities of the teacher. The researchers found that the methods used by the teacher to conduct his or her lessons while they were capable of stimulating the learners into action, assisting them

to learn, the same methods could also be the cause for the failure of learners. In this study the teachers relied on the numbers of students with reading and writing barriers declining from the beginning to end of year. The use of assorted methods encountered in the study must have helped in elimination of any shortcomings of the teacher in the classroom.

Effectiveness of literacy teaching strategies should be extended to involve teachers of other subjects as well. These teachers should provide feed-back in formation of how the learners are able to cope with understanding texts that they use in their respective areas. Thus a learner literate in reading English, for example, must be able to read their textbooks in agriculture or economic management sciences. The learners with barriers who did not benefit from the teaching strategies need to be referred to schools that cater for learners with such barriers. Alternatively, the current teachers should receive training in how to teach learners with learning barriers so that these learners can be taught without removing them for their natural habitat, to wit the home school and its environment. Effectiveness should also be tested by asking the learners who borrow books from the library to relate the stories they have read about in the books. They can do this to the teacher or to other learners at appointed times in class.

The method of grouping learners based on mixed-abilities stood out as the best recommended strategy by teachers of literacy in overcrowded classrooms. This is in agreement with the findings of Tuan and Nhu (2010) who noted that group work created the most relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. This in turn increases the quantity and quality of language use in students in these groups. When language learners work in groups they feel that they are not dictated to hurry to give sentences or answers compared to a whole-class approach (Long & Porter, 1985). Tuan and Nhu (2010) further explain that language learning is done through the collaboration and exchange of ideas between two or more learners and this is best facilitated through classroom group work. They posit that language acquisition and group work are interconnected. This study corroborated the work by Nakabugo et al., (2006) who found that one major strategy used in the overcrowded classrooms in Uganda according to the teachers was employing group work to enhance learning in their large

classes. They observed group work in thirty one percent of the studied lessons. The reason given by teachers for group work was to ease work management.

The study recommends that teachers should not over-rely on a rigid grouping strategy. They must relax the grouping method by introducing new group leaders through breaking and making new groups once or twice per term. This would ease any concerns that might be raised by those who might not be chosen to be group leaders in first term but would improve their grasp of literacy skills in the course of the term or year.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

On the basis of findings and literature review covered in this report, the following areas are recommended for further research:

- i. To explore remedial teaching methods in use for learners with learning barriers in conventional schools.
 - ii. To investigate effect of home language on English literacy teaching strategies to non-English speaking learners.
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Appendices

Appendix A

AN INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

TEACHING OF LITERACY COMPETENCIES IN OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS IN THE MAMAILA CIRCUIT, MOPANI DISTRICT.

My name is Molimisi Gilbert Matshipi. I am currently studying towards my master's degree with the University of Zululand on the topic: **Teaching of literacy competencies to learners in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila circuit, Mopani district.** I am grateful for your humbly request you to respond truthfully and to the best of your ability and knowledge. Data collected will be used for this study only. You are free to withdraw from the interview session if and when you feel that you are no longer comfortable to participate any further.

PLEASE, ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS AS HONESTLY AS YOU CAN, HOWEVER, WHERE YOUR RESPONSE IS NOT CLEAR, I WILL ASK YOU TO CLARIFY YOUR RESPONSE.

Your assistance is highly appreciated.

Thank you,

Molimisi Gilbert Matshipi

Appendix B

Interview Guide

PLEASE NOTE:

- i) This INTERVIEW seeks information that will be used for academic purposes only in a research that examines the teaching of literacy in overcrowded classrooms.
 - ii) The information that you provide will neither be used for promotional nor disciplinary purposes on the part of the teacher. It will not be used for ranking of your school on any scale of academic performance. The information which you provide will be assessed together with information from other teachers in order to find effective ways to deliver lessons in overcrowded classrooms.
 - iii) You are required to be as honest as you best can be in giving correct information.
-

SECTION A: The Teacher

1. Gender : Female Male
2. How many years have you been teaching in a) Foundation Phase _____ b) Intermediate Phase _____?
3. How many years have you been teaching Sepedi in Grade 4 or Grade 6?

4. How many years have you been teaching English in grade 4 or Grade 6?

SECTION B: The Class

5. How many learners are in your class? _____
6. Out of the total number of learners how many are:
Boys _____ and Girls _____?

SECTION C: Objectives-based questions

7. What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit?

Follow-up questions should include:

- To what effect are those strategies being used? (Have those strategies been successful? What makes you think they have been successful? If not successful, what makes you think that way?)
 - Why do you say so?
 - Which ones were most useful? Why do you say so?
8. How effective are the strategies primary teachers are using in teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?
- Why do you say so?
9. What are possible effective strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?
- Will the strategies help teachers to improve the performance of learners in literacy in overcrowded classroom?
 - Why do say so?

What is being done to address

Appendix C

Interview transcript

CS1 A

Title of transcript: Teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.

Interviewer: student

Interviewee: teacher (CS1-Curriculum Specialist level 1)

Interview setting: interview conducted in the office of the HOD in the administration building. Interview was conducted at 11:00 AM on Wednesday.

(Start of Interview)

Interviewer: *Good morning.*

Interviewee: *Morning sir*

Interviewer: *My name is Molimisi Gilbert Matshipi, am a student at university of Zululand. I'm here to conduct a to collect data. So firstly let me indicate to you that this interview it may take plus or minus 30 minutes. Then you your name is not going to mentioned anywhere, then feel free and when you participate here you participate voluntarily there's no incentives that you're going to get from this interview, I hope you understand that ?*

Interviewee: *yes*

Interviewer: *so let me get the first question to say how many years have you been teaching foundation or intermediate phase. In which phase I you teaching.*

Interviewee: *intermediate phase*

Interviewer: How many years?

Interviewee: ten years

Interviewer: How many year have you been teaching Sepedi in grade 4?

Interviewee: ten years

Interviewer: How many learners are in your class?

Interviewee: 139 learners

Interviewer: How many are boys?

Interviewee: 70 boys and 69 girls

Interviewer: What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?

Interviewee: ... the strategies that we are using, we group the learners in groups especial when they are reading.

Interviewer: so you group them in groups?

Interviewee: in groups especial when they are reading.

*Interviewer: **To what effect are those strategies been used?***

Interviewee: They seems to be successful because most of the learners are able to read and write for now.

*Interviewer: **What makes think that the strategy been successful?***

Interviewee: because when we do the assessment the learners do pass the test and other and do write class works and home works.

Interviewer: So are you using only one strategy or this strategy of grouping them only or do have other strategies?

Interviewee:

Interviewer: if is only one strategy there is no problem

Interviewee: ok

*Interviewer: **How effective are strategies been used?***

Interviewee: I did not understand the question.

Interviewer: How effective, because you have indicated that you're using the strategy of grouping learners in groups more especially when they are reading. You also indicated that the strategy is effective since learners are able to read and write. How effective is most effective not effective.

Interviewee: the strategy is effective

Interviewer: Why do you saying so?

Interviewee: as I have said when we are doing the assessment learners are able to write test at their own and do homework and class work and read at their own.

*Interviewer: **What are the possible effective strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy ,beside those strategies you already alluded, so what are possible effective strategies can teachers use in teaching literacy?.***

Interviewee: The other strategies that can be used is that the teacher can read the books for learners and let the learners read after the teacher read something from the book

Interviewer: Will the strategy help the teachers to improve the performance of learner's in literacy in overcrowded classroom?

Interviewee: yes, because the teacher will able to identify those learners who are unable to write and unable to read if he /she reads and then learners read after the teacher.

Interviewer: what have been done to address this challenges? Challenges of overcrowding?

Interviewee: nothing have been done so far

Interviewer: nothing have been done?

Interviewee: yes

Interviewer: thanks that is the end of our interview. I really appreciate you time

CS1 B

Interview transcript

Title of transcript: Teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.

Interviewer: student

Interviewee: teacher (CS1-Curriculum Specialist level 1)

Interview setting: interview conducted in the office of the HOD in the administration building. Interview was conducted at 11:35AM on Wednesday

(Start of Interview)

Interviewer: *Good morning.*

Interviewee: *Morning sir*

Interviewer: How are you?

Interviewee: I'm ok

Interviewer: I'm good

Interviewer: My name is Molimisi Gilbert Matshipi I'm a student of university of Zululand. I'm here to collect data. I'm having a project, my title is teaching literacy competencies to learners in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit. so as the ethical requirement of university your name is not going to publish anywhere when you participate here you participate voluntarily there's no incentives that you're going to get from this interview, so can we continue with the interview?

Interviewee: yes

Interviewer: How many years have you been teaching in the intermediate phase?

Interviewee: ten years

Interviewer: How many years have you been teaching Sepedi in grade 6?

Interviewee: ten years

Interviewer: How many learners are in your class?

Interviewee: 74 learners

Interviewer: How many are boys and how many are girls?

Interviewee: 34 boys and 40 girls

Interviewer: What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?

Interviewee: the teaching strategies that we are using is grouping learners so that we can teach them how to read and write and also writing as you know that our learners

don't know to read and write Sepedi, we also help them in writing the explanation of certain words them as Words Bank.

Interviewer: To what effect are those strategies been used?

Interviewee: quiet

Interviewer: have the strategy been successful?

Interviewee: yes, the strategy has been successful as you can see that other learners are able to read and write.

Interviewer: why do saying the strategy has been successful?

Interviewee: as I said that those learners are able to read and write Sepedi, for those who are unable to read and write we give them extra work so that they can be able to go on with others.

Interviewer: How effective is the strategy?

Interviewee: the strategy is effective because the number of learners who are not able to write and read the number is reduced, therefore the strategy is effective.

Interviewer: What are the possible effective strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy ,beside those strategies you already alluded, so what are possible effective strategies can teachers use in teaching literacy?.

Interviewee: the other strategies?

Interviewer: yes

Interviewee: as I have said the other strategies that can be used especially in Sepedi is by writing the words that those learners cannot read and write as our learners cannot read and write Sepedi, we write those words on the chalkboard used the as words bank or a sort of dictionary. Let the learners write them at the back of their note books

Interviewer: Will the strategy help the teachers to improve the performance of learner's in literacy in overcrowded classroom?

Interviewee: yes it will help the teacher because most of the time when the learner is reading and came across that they don't understand they will refer at the words bank and find the meaning of the words and this will increase his /her vocabulary.

Interviewer: thanks that is the end of our interview. I really appreciate you time

CS1 C

Interview transcript

Title of transcript: Teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.

Interviewer: student

Interviewee: teacher (CS1-Curriculum Specialist level 1)

Interview setting: interview conducted in the office of the HOD in the administration building. Interview was conducted at 12:10 AM on Wednesday

Interviewer: Good morning mama

Interviewee: morning

*Interviewer: my is Molimisi Matshipi am a student at university of Zululand.im doing a research so with the topic of **Teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.***

Interviewee: ok

Interviewer: So according to university of the Zululand, the ethical requirements for the university Zululand, you give consent to interview you

Interviewee: yes

Interviewer: The information that you provide will neither be used for promotional nor disciplinary purposes on the part of the teacher. It will not be used for ranking of your school on any scale of academic performance. The information which you provide will be assessed together with information from other teachers in order to find effective way to deliver lessons in overcrowded classrooms.

Interviewee: ok

Interviewer: How many years have you been teaching?

Interviewee: ten years

Interviewer: How many years have you been teaching English in grade 6?

Interviewee: five years

Interviewer: How many learners are in your class?

Interviewee: There are 139 learners

Interviewer: How many are boys?

Interviewee: 70 boys and 69 girls

Interviewer: What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?

Interviewee: In most cases we group them though is a little bit difficult to group them in a overcrowded class but we do group them, we do make groups.

Interviewer: **To what effective are those strategies being used?**

Interviewee: Sometimes it is effective because we are able to, I am able to identify those learners who are have difficulty in literacy in reading, so it become so effective because am able to see those learners unlike when am teaching them the whole class, because some they hide you can't see them, but when you group them, when your with them for certain period of time, so your able to see that such and such learner have got difficult in reading.

Interviewer: **so which one are the most useful, I mean those strategies that you are using in overcrowded classroom, you mentioned something like grouping and remedial?**

Interviewee: I think the two, the remedial and the grouping, they work hand in hand because from the groups am able to pick those need help and then from there those who need help am able to give them extra work to help them, just to see whether they understand what is expected from them, so I can say remedial helps a lot in groups.

Interviewer: **To what effect are those strategies been used?**

Interviewee: They are effective because the number of learners who are can't read they reduced, hence we divide this learners into the high level, the middle level and the lower level, so every time I assess this learners when they have done better they move to the other level so I can say they are effective.

Interviewer: **What are the possible effective strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy ,beside those strategies you already alluded, so what are possible effective strategies can teachers use in teaching literacy?.**

Interviewee: Although is so difficult to teach in overcrowded class, but sometimes what works for me is listening and speaking, of cause with resources because learners they learn better when they see especially grade 4, they learn better when they see that which you're talking about, so the listening and speaking is very interesting for them, they learn better, they relate.

Interviewer: **Will the strategy help the teachers to improve the performance of learner's in literacy in overcrowded classroom?**

Interviewee: Like I said when resources are there, if there are no resources like in some topics you find that they are no resource, there are no books, you are expected teach with posters , they are not there, so not really that effective.

Interviewer: **What have been done to address this challenges of overcrowded?**

Interviewee... for now we rely on the Department, though the delivery is slow, sometimes is not there, they are not there, the whole term goes then we don't have resources, books posters, it becomes so difficult.

Interviewer: *Thanks that is the end of our interview. I really appreciate you time.*

Interviewee: *you're welcome.*

CS1D

Interview transcript

Title of transcript: Teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.

Interviewer: student

Interviewee: teacher (CS1-Curriculum Specialist level 1)

Interview setting: interview conducted in the Staff room in the administration building.
Interview was conducted at 10:00 AM on Thursday

Interviewer: Good morning Sir

Interviewee: Morning

Interviewer: *My name is Molimisi Gilbert Matshipi, am a student at university of Zululand. I'm here to conduct a research with the topic Teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms.*

Interviewee: Ok

Interviewer... *according to the ethical clearance of the university, the information that you're going to give me here, it will be used for only academic purposes. Then the other thing is that information that you provide will neither be used for promotional nor disciplinary purposes on the part of the teacher. It will also not be used for ranking your school, so the information will be provided will be assessed together with information from other teachers in other to find ways to deliver lessons in overcrowded classrooms. So the other things is that There are no com.....incentives that you're going to get from this interview, then you're if you feel that you do no longer take part in this interview you're at liberty or you can withdraw. You give me consent to interview you?*

Interviewee: *Yes, I do give you consent.*

Interviewer: *So the other things is that I was supposed to write the notes, but do to time constrains I'm having a voice recorder here, so do you give me permission to record you during the interview?*

Interviewee: *yes you can*

Interviewer: *ok*

Interviewer... *How many years have you been teaching in the Intermediate Phase?*

Interviewee: *I have been teaching for 22 years*

Interviewer: *you have been teaching 22 years?*

Interviewee: *yes*

Interviewer: *So how many years have you been teaching English in Grade 4?*

Interviewee: *I have been teaching... English for six years (6).*

Interviewer: for six years?

Interviewee: Yes

Interviewer: So how many learners do have in your class?

Interviewee: I have 51 learners.

Interviewer: Out of the 51, how many are Boys and how many are Girls?

Interviewee: We have 22 boys and 29 girls.

Interviewer: **What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?**

Interviewee: The strategy that I usually use is group work whereby I group learners, 4 to 5 learners. Among them there must be a leader who will guide them. I give them a task all of them. I monitor those groups to see whether they are doing the work that I gave them. And I make sure that I always tell the group leaders to always guide the other ones because you'll see that the leader is the bright learner and the other learners. You'll see we have the middle learners and the slow learners. I can't say they are slow learners, those with barriers. The task of the leader is to guide those ones. I monitor if there is going to be a presentation the leader is the one who's going to present to me. That is the strategy I use. The other one whenever there is a reading lesson I make sure that these learners start by reading in groups and after that they read in pairs. When between them they find that one is not confident enough, but when they read in pairs that learner becomes confident. At times there are some words that he is not able to pronounce but when he hears the one I paired him with then he's able to hear how those words are pronounced.

Interviewer: **To what effect are those strategies being used?**

Interviewee: They are very effective because I've seen some improvement. Those learners have improved a lot especially the learners with the barriers, they have improved a lot. We've got beautiful learners but unable to read. Most of them have improved because they are helped by the learners who are bright.

Interviewer: **Have those strategies been successful?**

Interviewee: They have been successful a lot, because I see a difference from the first term to the second term and to the third term. The pass rate improves as the year goes.

Interviewer: **Which once are the most successful strategies?**

Interviewee: The most useful strategy is this one of group work.

Interviewer: **Why do say so?**

Interviewee: I have seen the improvement since we have emphases that must use them, we see the learners are improving a lot. As of now learners who are were not able to read are better than before.

Interviewer: *What are the possible effective strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy ,beside those strategies you already alluded, so what are possible effective strategies can teachers use in teaching literacy?.*

Interviewee: *I don't have any other strategies except the one I gave you.*

Interviewer: *What have been done to address this challenges of overcrowded?*

Interviewee: *We divide those learners, we divide the classes into A and B. So that those classes can be controlled easy.*

Interviewer: *Do you have enough classes or enough educators?*

Interviewee: *We don't have enough classes and we also don't have enough teachers, because the issue of teachers is in the hands of Government, so we don't have control of it.*

Interviewer: *Thanks that is the end of our interview. I really appreciate you time.*

Interviewee: *Thank you*

Interview transcript

Title of transcript: Teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.

Interviewer: student

Interviewee: teacher (CS1-Curriculum Specialist level 1)

Interview setting: interview conducted in the Staff room in the administration building.

Interview was conducted at 10:35 AM on Thursday

Interviewer: Good morning Mam

Interviewee: Morning sir

Interviewer: *My name is Molimisi Gilbert Matshipi, am a student at university of Zululand. I'm here to conduct a research with the topic Teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms.*

Interviewee: Ok

Interviewer... *according to the ethical clearance of the university, the information that you're going to give me here, it will be used for only academic purposes. Then the other thing is that information that you provide will neither be used for promotional nor disciplinary purposes on the part of the teacher. It will also not be used for ranking your school, so the information will be provided will be assessed together with information from other teachers in other to find ways to deliver lessons in overcrowded classrooms. So the other things is that There are no com.....incentives that you're going to get from this interview, then you're if you feel that you do no longer take part in this interview you're at liberty or you can withdraw. You give me consent to interview you?*

Interviewee: *Yes, I do give you consent.*

Interviewer: *So the other things is that I was supposed to write the notes, but do to time constrains I'm having a voice recorder here, so do you give me permission to record you during the interview?*

Interviewee: *yes you can*

Interviewer: *ok*

Interviewer... *How many years have you been teaching in the Intermediate Phase?*

Interviewee: *I have been teaching for 21 years*

Interviewer: *How many years have been teaching Sepedi in grade 4?*

Interviewer: *So how many learners do have in your class?*

Interviewee: *I have 51 learners.*

Interviewer: *Out of the 51, how many are Boys and how many are Girls?*

Interviewee: *We have 22 boys and 29 girls.*

Interviewer: ***What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?***

Interviewee: *Firstly I must make sure that I group them. I divide these learners into groups so that it must be easier for me to tackle, may be to work with me in these sitting groups. If I use attend to them individually may be some of them may be left out. I group them according to mixed abilities; with different abilities...They'll be group leaders so that they help me to facilitate and to monitor the whole learning process.*

Interviewer: ***To what effect are those strategies being used?***

Interviewee: *The strategy is so effective although is not 100% effective because there are those learners, whom you can see even you're in the classroom that this learners, maybe she or he is having a problem at home, it maybe truancy or sickness or any family matters he has, you find the learner been absent from the lesson, been negatively involve in the lesson, but I try by all means to involve the learner but you will see that this learners, this child has got maybe a problem, one other thing thus it why I say it won't be 100% due to the fact that there are those learners who are less gifted in the classroom, even if you can do all the strategies, apply all the strategies, all methods you can fail, because this is how they are, they are less gifted and some of them need Psychologist, they are not suitable to our environment , you can see, this learners needs , there are learners, let me just say, in my classroom , there are learners with special needs, that needs special attention. More than what were have in our school. We do have some of resources, some strategies, but they fail to cater*

them, because they belong somewhere where they deal with learners with special need, thus why we cannot produce 100%. If I discover learners with learning barrier I try to group them, even at the end of each term I check at their performance, analyse them and write down their names, so that maybe after school or during the weekend or whatever I call them in groups and then I give them foundation phase readers, so that they start with sound, so I do remedial. Taking foundation phase resources so that they start where they supposed to be. Even when coming to the marking of their books I mark them on my own.

Interviewer: Have those strategies been successful?

Interviewee: yes, they are.

Interviewer: what makes you to think they are successful?

Interviewer: I can see the improvement, maybe for example during the 1st term the number of learners who failed was very higher, but during the 2nd term the number was reduced even during the 3 term the number was very lower than the two previous terms, therefore the strategy is successful.

Interviewer: Which once are the most successful strategies?

Interviewee: The most useful strategy is this one of group work and learner centred method.

Interviewer: What are the possible effective strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy ,beside those strategies you already alluded, so what are possible effective strategies can teachers use in teaching literacy?.

Interviewee: The field studies strategy. If you want to teach learners about library take them to library and experience library themselves so that they can see it. Learners learn by see sometimes through observation, through imitating.

Interviewer: Will that strategies help teachers to improve the performance of learners in literacy, in overcrowded classroom, the one you already mentioned now?

Interviewee: Yes, it will

Interviewer: Why do you say so?

Interviewee: *Because if they, you take time in the field work. You apply more resources and demonstrate things at them before the lesson. For example in language if you teach them new words to learn , you give them dictionaries to check the meaning of those words, it will help them to improve the literacy*

Interviewer: ***What have been done to address this challenges of overcrowded?***

Interviewee: *nothing have been done so far from the department of education but for school we divide learners into two classes even though is overcrowded.*

Interviewer: ***Thank you sir, that was final of our interview.***

Interviewee: *Ok, thank you very much.*

Interviewer: ***I really appreciate you time***

Interviewee: *Ok, thank you very much.*

CS1 F

Interview transcript

Title of transcript: Teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.

Interviewer: student

Interviewee: teacher (CS1-Curriculum Specialist level 1)

Interview setting: interview conducted in the Staff room in the administration building.
Interview was conducted at 11:05 AM on Thursday

Interviewer: Good morning Mam

Interviewee: Morning sir

Interviewer: *My name is Molimisi Gilbert Matshipi, am a student at university of Zululand. I'm here to conduct a research with the topic Teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms.*

Interviewee: Ok

Interviewer... *according to the ethical clearance of the university, the information that you're going to give me here, it will be used for only academic purposes. Then the other thing is that information that you provide will neither be used for promotional nor disciplinary purposes on the part of the teacher. It will also not be used for ranking your school, so the information will be provided will be assessed together with information from other teachers in other to find ways to deliver lessons in overcrowded classrooms. So the other things is that There are no com.....incentives that you're going to get from this interview, then you're if you feel that you do no longer take part in this interview you're at liberty or you can withdraw. You give me consent to interview you?*

Interviewee: *Yes, I do give you consent.*

Interviewer: *So the other things is that I was supposed to write the notes, but do to time constrains I'm having a voice recorder here, so do you give me permission to record you during the interview?*

Interviewee: *yes you can*

Interviewer: *ok*

Interviewer... *How many years have you been teaching in the Intermediate Phase?*

Interviewee: *I have been teaching for 17 years*

Interviewer: *How many years have been teaching Sepedi in grade 6?*

Interviewer: *So how many learners do have in your class?*

Interviewee: *I have 78 learners.*

Interviewer: *Out of the 78, how many are Boys and how many are Girls?*

Interviewee: We have 39 boys and 39 girls.

Interviewer: *What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?*

Interviewee: *The strategies that I'm using, because the class is overcrowded I group them firstly in group where in those groups I will have a group leader or maybe a reporter who will report the findings on what they've agreed upon. But this group leader will be able to check each individual member. Each learner in the group will have a turn to take part or maybe to do something in the group so that finally I will be able to get the result. I am able to give them individual work apart from group work so that they can have confidence to work when they are alone. I check all the groups in the class moving around when they are working. From there I tell them I will do random sampling so that I can encourage each and every group they must take part in the lesson that I am teaching.*

Interviewer: *To what effect are those strategies being used?*

Interviewee: *Those strategies can be used maybe twice a week. I can use it like that.*

Interviewer: *Have those strategies been successful?*

Interviewee: *Yes they are successful because this is evident when I can see the progress of the learner. It's not reading only there are also grammars. I check twice a week and when I'm doing the assessment these learners are doing a wonderful work. Initially the other learners were lagging behind have improved. You see the programme by the government which says the learner must not repeat a phase twice or thrice these have an impact on us. Those learners who were having barriers I can see they are having improved work as they do not want to repeat."*

Interviewer: *what makes you to think they are successful?*

Interviewer: *I can see the improvement, maybe for example during the 1st term the number of learners who failed was very higher, but during the 2nd term the number was reduced even during the 3 term the number was very lower than the two previous terms, therefore the strategy is successful.*

Interviewer: *Which once are the most successful strategies?*

CS1 G

Interview transcript

Title of transcript: Teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.

Interviewer: student

Interviewee: teacher (CS1-Curriculum Specialist level 1)

Interview setting: interview conducted in the Staff room in the administration building.
Interview was conducted at 11:35 AM on Thursday

Interviewer: Good morning Mam

Interviewee: Morning sir

Interviewer: *My name is Molimisi Gilbert Matshipi, am a student at university of Zululand. I'm here to conduct a research with the topic Teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms.*

Interviewee: Ok

Interviewer... *according to the ethical clearance of the university, the information that you're going to give me here, it will be used for only academic purposes. Then the other thing is that information that you provide will neither be used for promotional nor disciplinary purposes on the part of the teacher. It will also not be used for ranking your school, so the information will be provided will be assessed together with information from other teachers in other to find ways to deliver lessons in overcrowded classrooms. So the other things is that There are no com.....incentives that you're going to get from this interview, then you're if you feel that you do no longer take part in this interview you're at liberty or you can withdraw. You give me consent to interview you?*

Interviewee: *Yes, I do give you consent.*

Interviewer: *So the other things is that I was supposed to write the notes, but do to time constrains I'm having a voice recorder here, so do you give me permission to record you during the interview?*

Interviewee: *yes you can*

Interviewer: *ok*

Interviewer... *How many years have you been teaching in the Intermediate Phase?*

Interviewee: *I have been teaching for 21 years*

Interviewer: *How many years have been teaching Sepedi in grade 4?*

Interviewer: *So how many learners do have in your class?*

Interviewee: *I have 51 learners.*

Interviewer: *Out of the 51, how many are Boys and how many are Girls?*

Interviewee: We have 22 boys and 29 girls.

Interviewer: **What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?**

Interviewee: Firstly I must make sure that I group them. I divide these learners into groups so that it must be easier for me to tackle, may be to work with me in these sitting groups. If I use attend to them individually may be some of them may be left out. I group them according to mixed abilities; with different abilities...They'll be group leaders so that they help me to facilitate and to monitor the whole learning process.

Interviewer: **To what effect are those strategies being used?**

Interviewee: The strategy is so effective although is not 100% effective because there are those learners, whom you can see even you're in the classroom that this learners, maybe she or he is having a problem at home, it maybe truancy or sickness or any family matters he has, you find the learner been absent from the lesson, been negatively involve in the lesson, but I try by all means to involve the learner but you will see that this learners, this child has got maybe a problem, one other thing thus it why I say it won't be 100% due to the fact that there are those learners who are less gifted in the classroom, even if you can do all the strategies, apply all the strategies, all methods you can fail, because this is how they are, they are less gifted and some of them need Psychologist, they are not suitable to our environment , you can see, this learners needs , there are learners, let me just say, in my classroom , there are learners with special needs, that needs special attention. More than what were have in our school. We do have some of resources, some strategies, but they fail to cater them, because they belong somewhere where they deal with learners with special need, thus why we cannot produce 100%. If I discover learners with learning barrier I try to group them, even at the end of each term I check at their performance, analyse them and write down their names, so that maybe after school or during the weekend or whatever I call them in groups and then I give them foundation phase readers, so that they start with sound, so I do remedial. Taking foundation phase resources so that they start where they supposed to be. Even when coming to the marking of their books I mark them on my own.

Interviewer: **Have those strategies been successful?**

Interviewee: yes, they are.

Interviewer: **what makes you to think they are successful?**

Interviewer: I can see the improvement, maybe for example during the 1st term the number of learners who failed was very higher, but during the 2nd term the number was reduced even during the 3 term the number was very lower than the two previous terms, therefore the strategy is successful.

Interviewer: **Which once are the most successful strategies?**

Interviewee: The most useful strategy is this one of group work and learner centred method.

Interviewer: *What are the possible effective strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy ,beside those strategies you already alluded, so what are possible effective strategies can teachers use in teaching literacy?.*

Interviewee: *The field studies strategy. If you want to teach learners about library take them to library and experience library themselves so that they can see it. Learners learn by see sometimes through observation, through imitating*

Interviewer: *Will that strategies help teachers to improve the performance of learners in literacy, in overcrowded classroom, the one you already mentioned now?*

Interviewee: *Yes, it will*

Interviewer: *Why do you say so?*

Interviewee: *Because if they, you take time in the field work. You apply more resources and demonstrate things at them before the lesson. For example in language if you teach them new words to learn , you give them dictionaries to check the meaning of those words, it will help them to improve the literacy*

Interviewer: *What have been done to address this challenges of overcrowded?*

Interviewee: *nothing have been done so far from the department of education but for school we divide learners into two classes even though is overcrowded.*

Interviewer: *Thank you sir, that was final of our interview.*

Interviewee: *Ok, thank you very much.*

Interviewer: *I really appreciate you time*

Interviewee: *Ok, thank you very much.*

Title of transcript: Teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.

Interviewer: student

Interviewee: teacher (CS1-Curriculum Specialist level 1)

Interview setting: interview conducted in the Staff room in the administration building.
Interview was conducted at 10:35 AM on Monday

Interviewer: Good morning Mam

Interviewee: Morning sir

Interviewer: *My name is Molimisi Gilbert Matshipi, am a student at university of Zululand. I'm here to conduct a research with the topic Teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms.*

Interviewee: Ok

Interviewer... *according to the ethical clearance of the university, the information that you're going to give me here, it will be used for only academic purposes. Then the other thing is that information that you provide will neither be used for promotional nor disciplinary purposes on the part of the teacher. It will also not be used for ranking your school, so the information will be provided will be assessed together with information from other teachers in other to find ways to deliver lessons in overcrowded classrooms. So the other things is that There are no com.....incentives that you're going to get from this interview, then you're if you feel that you do no longer take part in this interview you're at liberty or you can withdraw. You give me consent to interview you?*

Interviewee: *Yes, I do give you consent.*

Interviewer: *So the other things is that I was supposed to write the notes, but do to time constrains I'm having a voice recorder here, so do you give me permission to record you during the interview?*

Interviewee: *yes you can*

Interviewer: *ok*

Interviewer... *How many years have you been teaching in the Intermediate Phase?*

Interviewee: *I have been teaching for 9 years*

Interviewer: *How many years have been teaching Sepedi in grade 4?*

Interviewee: *4 years*

Interviewer: *So how many learners do have in your class?*

Interviewee: *I have 75 learners.*

Interviewer: Out of the 75, how many are Boys and how many are Girls?

Interviewee: We have 35 boys and 40 girls.

Interviewer: **What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?**

Interviewee: “As our class is overcrowded, we group them according to their abilities. For slow learners we add more time, early in the morning or afternoon or sometimes we would teach them on Saturdays.”

Interviewer: **To what effect are those strategies being used?**

Interviewee: Yes there are effective, because the number of failures are decreasing in every term

Interviewer: **Which once are the most successful strategies?**

Interviewee: The afternoon is most successful because all learners are available, unlike in the morning

Interviewer: **What are the possible effective strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy ,beside those strategies you already alluded, so what are possible effective strategies can teachers use in teaching literacy?.**

Interviewee: I real don't understand the question. It is very difficult to answer it.

Interviewer: **What have been done to address this challenges of overcrowded?**

Interviewee: as educators we just inform the principal about the overcrowded classroom and is the one who takes the matter to the circuit office.

Interviewer: **Thank you sir, that was final of our interview.**

Interviewee: thank you very much.

CS1 I

Interview transcript

Title of transcript: Teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.

Interviewer: student

Interviewee: teacher (CS1-Curriculum Specialist level 1)

Interview setting: interview conducted in the Staff room in the administration building.

Interview was conducted at 10:45 AM on Wednesday

Interviewer: Good morning Mam

Interviewee: Morning sir

Interviewer: My name is Molimisi Gilbert Matshipi, am a student at university of Zululand. I'm here to conduct a research with the topic Teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms.

Interviewee: Ok

Interviewer... according to the ethical clearance of the university, the information that you're going to give me here, it will be used for only academic purposes. Then the other thing is that information that you provide will neither be used for promotional nor disciplinary purposes on the part of the teacher. It will also not be used for ranking your school, so the information will be provided will be assessed together with information from other teachers in order to find ways to deliver lessons in overcrowded classrooms. So the other things is that There are no com.....incentives that you're going to get from this interview, then you're if you feel that you do no longer take part in this interview you're at liberty or you can withdraw. You give me consent to interview you?

Interviewee: Yes, I do give you consent.

Interviewer: So the other things is that I was supposed to write the notes, but do to time constrains I'm having a voice recorder here, so do you give me permission to record you during the interview?

Interviewee: yes you can

Interviewer: *ok*

Interviewer... *How many years have you been teaching in the Intermediate Phase?*

Interviewee: *I have been teaching for 12 years*

Interviewer: *How many years have been teaching English in grade 6?*

Interviewee: *12 years*

Interviewer: *So how many learners do have in your class?*

Interviewee: *I have 64 learners.*

Interviewer: *Out of the 64, how many are Boys and how many are Girls?*

Interviewee: *We have 38 boys and 26 girls.*

Interviewer: ***What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?***

Interviewee: *We grouped them, there are group leaders, by the time when I'm teaching this group leaders, they assist me in that overcrowded class. When I'm moving around, I'm facilitating as you know that most of the work must be done by learners. I guide this group leaders, then they do what I tell them to do in that class.*

Interviewer: ***To what effect are those strategies being used?***

Interviewee: *The strategy is so effective, because I want this learners to participate, I want to achieve my goal and to see this learners who don't do well and there are those who are doing well and are those who are shy. I want to see those who are shy participating when they see others are participating in the class.*

Interviewer: ***Have those strategies been successful?***

Interviewee: *yes, they are.*

Interviewer: ***what makes you to think they are successful?***

Interviewee: *It is successful because when I ask questions after reading the story learners are able to answer questions when I ask.*

Interviewer: ***Which once are the most successful strategies?***

Interviewee: *The most usefully strategy is that one of involving all the learners so that all learners can see that they are in the same classroom. I don't discriminate learners, I want them to feel that I'm they friend and they must enjoy learning.*

Interviewer: *What are the possible effective strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy ,beside those strategies you already alluded, so what are possible effective strategies can teachers use in teaching literacy?.*

Interviewee: *If you are teaching a story, let me say they are reading the story, you must ask, tell them to read the title, look at the picture in the book and ask questions about the pictures in the book and again ask questions about the title and not before they read the story.*

Interviewer: *Will this strategy help teachers to improve performance of literacy in overcrowded classrooms?*

Interviewee: *Yes*

Interviewer: *Why I you saying so?*

Interviewee: *Even though I may say take another book for other class, then ask a learner about the title, they know what the title of the story is. If there is a picture, they can say something about the picture, they can form a small paragraph about the picture.*

Interviewer: *What have been done to address the challenge of overcrowding?*

Interviewee: *if we are free, we used to have free period in the afternoon, im going to work with those learners who are not able to read. If one teacher is absent from school, I used the period to work with the learners*

Interviewer: *Thank you sir, that was final of our interview.*

Interviewee: *Ok, thank you very much.*

Interviewer: *I really appreciate you time*

Interviewee: *Ok, thank you very much.*

CS1 J

Interview transcript

Title of transcript: Teaching literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.

Interviewer: student

Interviewee: teacher (CS1-Curriculum Specialist level 1)

Interview setting: interview conducted in the Staff room in the administration building.

Interview was conducted at 10:35 AM on Friday

Interviewer: Good morning Mam

Interviewee: Morning sir

Interviewer: My name is Molimisi Gilbert Matshipi, am a student at university of Zululand. I'm here to conduct a research with the topic Teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms.

Interviewee: Ok

Interviewer... according to the ethical clearance of the university, the information that you're going to give me here, it will be used for only academic purposes. Then the other thing is that information that you provide will neither be used for promotional nor disciplinary purposes on the part of the teacher. It will also not be used for ranking your school, so the information will be provided will be assessed together with information from other teachers in order to find ways to deliver lessons in overcrowded classrooms. So the other things is that There are no com.....incentives that you're going to get from this interview, then you're if you feel that you do no longer take part in this interview you're at liberty or you can withdraw. You give me consent to interview you?

Interviewee: Yes, I do give you consent.

Interviewer: So the other things is that I was supposed to write the notes, but do to time constraints I'm having a voice recorder here, so do you give me permission to record you during the interview?

Interviewee: yes you can

Interviewer: *ok*

Interviewer... *How many years have you been teaching in the Intermediate Phase?*

Interviewee: *I have been teaching for 15 years*

Interviewer: *How many years have been teaching English in grade 4?*

Interviewee: *15 years*

Interviewer: *So how many learners do have in your class?*

Interviewee: *I have 75 learners.*

Interviewer: *Out of the 75, how many are Boys and how many are Girls?*

Interviewee: *We have 35 boys and 40 girls.*

Interviewer: ***What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?***

Interviewee: *As educator you must dedicated to your work, be on time, make sure that learners get used to read, when they are reading make sure that you underline words in past tense, words that need definitions, make sure they are having their personal dictionaries*

Interviewer: ***To what effect are those strategies being used?***

Interviewee: *it makes educators work very easily, learners are more alerted, and it must be done continuously when you're in the classroom modelling must be continuously so that you arose their interest*

CS 1 K

Interview transcript

Title of transcript: Teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.

Interviewer: student

Interviewee: teacher (CS1-Curriculum Specialist level 1)

Interview setting: interview conducted in the office of the principal in the administration building. Interview was conducted at 11:00 AM on Wednesday.

(Start of Interview)

Interviewer: *Good morning sir*

Interviewee: *Morning sir*

Interviewer: *My name is Molimisi Gilbert Matshipi, am a student at university of Zululand. I'm here to conduct a research with the topic Teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms.*

Interviewee: *ok*

Interviewer... *according to the ethical clearance of the university, the information that you're going to give me here, it will be used for only academic purposes. Then the other thing is that information that you provide will neither be used for promotional nor disciplinary purposes on the part of the teacher. It will also not be used for ranking your school, so the information will be provided will be assessed together with information from other teachers in other to find ways to deliver lessons in overcrowded classrooms. So the other things is that There are no com.....incentives that you're going to get from this interview, then you're if you feel that you do no longer take part in this interview you're at liberty or you can withdraw. You give me consent to interview you?*

Interviewee: *Yes, I do give you consent.*

Interviewer: *So the other things is that I was supposed to write the notes, but do to time constrains I'm having a voice recorder here, so do you give me permission to record you during the interview?*

Interviewee: *yes you can*

Interviewer: *ok*

Interviewer... *How many years have you been teaching in the Intermediate Phase?*

Interviewee: *I have been teaching for 23 years*

Interviewer: *you have been teaching 23 years*

Interviewee: yes

Interviewer: so how many years have you been teaching Sepedi in Grade 6?

Interviewee: I have been teaching... Sepedi for twenty three years (23).

Interviewer: twenty three years?

Interviewee: Yes

Interviewer: So how many learners do have in your class?

Interviewee: I have 65 learners.

Interviewer: Out of the 65, how many are Boys and how many are Girls?

Interviewee: We have 38 boys and 27 girls.

Interviewer: **What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?**

Interviewee: **Jah!** In fact chipi, we have got a problem of overcrowding at our school, more especial in this class of 65 learners, of which according to me a teacher ratio in Primary all school, it should be 1:40 if I'm not wrong, and then we come across a lot of challenges, though the strategies that we use to when teaching this kids eh! eh! eh!eh!eh! like what we eh!eh!eh! When we are, let me say I'm teaching what now like eh! eh !eh!

Interviewer: you can say it in Sepedi

Interviewee: When I'm teaching mahlalosetsa otee

Interviewer: Synonyms

Interviewee: **jah!** Synomys, I believe that those learners are familiar with them, because we are teaching them in Sepedi and also in English but the only problem or the only challenge that we have is that those learners who are able to catch up earlier, because we got slow learners, average learners and learners who got IQ of 80% and sometimes, le time constrains and you may find I'm having a period of Sepedi which having 1 hour and then after that particular hour, then only to find that I have not yet been able to complete my presentation therefore, if the period is over, then I won't able to proceed therefore I won't able to complete my syllabus in or in time

Interviewer: **But even though you already alluded that your class is overcrowded, what are the teaching strategies, how do you teach them in overcrowded classroom?**

Interviewee: **Jah!** We try by all means or I try by all means like maybe moving around the passegas, though they are too congested we just move around busy trying to teach them so though some of them you may find that they are busy playing on the other side simple because they are many and you won't able to see who are concentrating, others are not concentrating but we try by all means to teach them more special this method of Drill method and then I believe that this is the only method that attract the learners attention because all of them then will be able to read when we say

“Mahlalosetsa o tee” all of them are going to drill that words and giving the definition of the words and learners will concentrate or attracted to that particular lesson. In short overcrowding is destroying what we call the progress our learners

Interviewer: To what effect are those strategies being used?

Interviewee: Jah! It is effective or I may saying there are effective but not that much, because is effective for those learners whom their IQ is above 70% but for those who IQ is less than 40% is difficult, thus why you find that there is a learner in grade 7 or in the a FET who is not able to read in home language which is Sepedi or Xitsonga, that is a challenge that we come across.

Interviewer: Have those strategies being successful?

Interviewee: I may say they have being successful because these learners proceed from one class to another, some are able to catch up, those slow learners are unable to catch up.

Interviewer: W makes you think that the strategy is being successful?

Interviewee: Because each and every term the number of learners who are not able to read, the number is reduced.

Interviewer: Which ones because you already mentioned some strategies there, which ones most useful one?

Interviewee: The only strategy which is good to teach these kids, more special in overcrowded classroom is just to teach this learners during lesson, after school you just pick learners who are not doing well and left with them behind with those learners, just try to re teach or represent the same lesson that you presented during school hours, therefore all this learners will be able to catch up.

Interviewer: how effective are the strategies?

Interviewee: The only way is just a drill method that is the only method which I think can assist these learners because that one it hold or attract the attention of all learners.

Interviewer: Why are you saying so?

Interviewee: I'm saying this because if maybe you fail to drill these learners and then you may find that on the other side , because they are many, you may find that others are playing, we rest others are not concentrating on the lesson.

Interviewer:What are the possible effective strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy ,beside those strategies you already alluded, so what are possible effective strategies can teachers use in teaching literacy?.

Interviewee: The only way that the other strategies we use “chipi” just to or maybe, just maybe if the classroom can be divided into two, the department should also erect other classroom and employ other educators so that this learners can be divided into two classes, therefore we will be able to attend this learners individual and we will be able to see where a learner come across some challenges.

Interviewer: You mean if we can reduce the number of learners in the classroom?

Interviewee: Yes, like now we are having 65 learners of which is abnormal class, but if the class can be divided into two, then it will be, that one is the responsibility of the department were they supposed to erect other classrooms and employ more educators,

I think that one is the best strategy that we can use in order to make our learners to catch everything

Interviewer: Will that strategies help teachers to improve the performance of learners in literacy, in overcrowded classroom, the one you already mentioned now?

Interviewee: Definitely sure about that one, immediately learners are going to be divided into two classes, like if that one, immediately learners are going to be divided into two classes, like if you're having 66 learners, therefore each class is going to have 33 learners, 33 learners as an educator you will be able to attend them individual and you will be able to see how slow learners come across some challenges so forth.

Interviewer: Why do you think so?

Interviewee: I'm saying this because last time our FET class, which is grade 7 class, I was having 39 learners and out of 39 all of them managed to pass

Interviewer: What have been done to address the challenge of overcrowding?

Interviewee: Jah!, We use to call eh!, parent, whereby we come across accountability meetings, whereby we as educators we start by, the principal convene a meeting with staff whereby we just cough all challenges that we across and intervention strategies that mightly use to overcome this type of situation and we also used this to get results.

Interviewer: How is the parental involvement in this challenge?

Interviewee: Jah! That is a good question Mr Matshipi there are more parents especial now days , we are working with eh !,eh!eh! a newly can I say eh! eh! parent who are from school, most of them, though are drop out but they were able to be managed to pass, inter, foundation, intermediate and FET up to grade 11 if not grade12 and they know what education is and they know the advantages of being a learner, what is needed from a learner, what is need for a learner to do to have brighter future, most of them used to assist this learners while there are at home with Home activities, assignments and whatever.

Interviewer: Thank you sir, that was final of our interview.

Interviewee: Ok, thank you very much.

Interviewer: I really appreciate you time

Interviewee: Ok, thank you very much.

CS1 L

Interview transcript

Title of transcript: Teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila Circuit.

Interviewer: student

Interviewee: teacher (CS1-Curriculum Specialist level 1)

Interview setting: interview conducted in the office of the principal in the administration building. Interview was conducted at 11:00 AM on Wednesday.

(Start of Interview)

Interviewer: *Good morning sir*

Interviewee: *Morning sir*

Interviewer: *My name is Molimisi Gilbert Matshipi, am a student at university of Zululand. I'm here to conduct a research with the topic Teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms.*

Interviewee: *ok*

Interviewer... *according to the ethical clearance of the university, the information that you're going to give me here, it will be used for only academic purposes. Then the other thing is that information that you provide will neither be used for promotional nor disciplinary purposes on the part of the teacher. It will also not be used for ranking your school, so the information will be provided will be assessed together with information from other teachers in other to find ways to deliver lessons in overcrowded classrooms. So the other things is that There are no com.....incentives that you're going to get from this interview, then you're if you feel that you do no longer take part in this interview you're at liberty or you can withdraw. You give me consent to interview you?*

Interviewee: *Yes, I do give you consent.*

Interviewer: *So the other things is that I was supposed to write the notes, but do to time constrains I'm having a voice recorder here, so do you give me permission to record you during the interview?*

Interviewee: *yes you can*

Interviewer: *ok*

Interviewer... *How many years have you been teaching in the Intermediate Phase?*

Interviewee: *I have been teaching for 17 years*

Interviewer: *you have been teaching 17 years*

Interviewee: yes

Interviewer: so how many years have you been teaching English in Grade 6?

Interviewee: I have been teaching... English for sixteen years (16).

Interviewer: for sixteen years?

Interviewee: Yes

Interviewer: So how many learners do have in your class?

Interviewee: I have 73 learners.

Interviewer: Out of the 73, how many are Boys and how many are Girls?

Interviewee: We have forty boys and thirty three girls.

Interviewer: ok, no is overcrowded.

Interviewee: haa! Is overcrowded.

Interviewer: **What are the teaching strategies being used to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms?**

Interviewee: In grade 6 we use what we call group guided reading. We also use what we call communicative language teaching, shared reading, reading aloud, paired reading and independent reading. I'll also talk about this group guided reading. This is a strategy that we, first of all screen the learners in class according to their ability to read then we compile a list of those who are struggling. Then during the lesson we call those learners to come to the front. We arrange tables, then we give other learners a task to do, then we call those who are struggling even if we may not call all of them. We just pick from the list but we don't tell them that they are unable to read, we just call them from their different groups to come to the front. Then we read a text which the teacher prepared before. Then we also give those learners a chance to read independently during that lesson. So that is how we try to teach reading in the classroom.

"With regard to communicative reading we encourage them to use English when they are on the premises of the school, even when they want to ask for permission to go to the toilet or whatever we encourage them to use English. So we also ask them to read during morning assembly then they read the Bible. They take turns from grades 4, 5, 6 and 7. It depends on the time table on which grade is reading on that particular day. So that is what we normally do.

"And we also model the reading. Most of the time we model the reading when there is a story that they have to go through. The teacher reads the story aloud to the learners and they listen. And as the teacher reads sometimes we stop along the way and ask them questions to check their understanding, whether they are following what the teacher is reading. And that will assist us a lot because if they see the teacher modelling the reading they will be motivated in one way or another to read on their own."

Interviewer: To what effect are those strategies being used?

Interviewee: *I think this strategies are effective because now they come the office to borrow books without being told to come so they have developed a culture of reading and those strategies have assisted us a lot because even if we check on the list of learners who are struggling to read it now being reduce because if we for example had thirty learners who are struggling now we have twenty and the number goes down and down so they are trying now, they are trying the number is going down and down.*

Interviewer: Which ones because you already mentioned some strategies there, which ones most useful one?

Interviewee: *I think group guided one and Communicative language these ones are best, there the best.*

Interviewer: Why are you saying so?

Interviewee: *I'm saying this because ... ee when we call them to come to the front and we start by modelling reading with them, there after we read them together we call it shared reading, we read with those learners who are struggling, the teacher reads with those learners only and they gain confidence because they're not reading with the rest of the class or maybe they're not reading individually, they read as group of learners who are struggling there and then we also give them chance to read individually and they improved a lot, they improved a lot.*

Interviewer: and then how effective are the strategies?

Interviewee: *I think they are effective because eeee the vocabulary of the learners has improved a lot, because what we normally do is before we even read the text we discuss key words with those learners, and we tried to get the meaning those words and capture those words in their ee their personal dictionaries, they have developed personal dictionaries were in they jot down difficult words with the explanation, so in that way they vocabulary ee improved a great deal, so they are now trying to read, although their not fluent but you can see there is an improvement.*

Interviewer: so what about those who are not able to, you said there are able to read and write as per PIRLS

Interviewee: *yes*

Interviewer: so you have indicated that those who are unable to read they now able to read, to show that the strategy is so effective, when you see that they able to come and borrow some books

Interviewee: *yes*

Interviewer: What about those who are not able to write?

Interviewee: *Those who are not able to write?*

Interviewer: *mm*

Interviewee: We normally each an everyday in the morning for at least two to five minutes we do what we call letter sounding, yes, we do what we call letter sounding and word formation because we have discovered that some of the learners are unable to sound certain letters of alphabet, so we do what we call letter sounding, for example the letter "D" for Dog, so we also put a word that has got the letters that we want them to sound, the learners to sound those words.

Interviewer: ok

Interviewee: yes

Interviewer:What are the possible effective strategies that teachers can use in teaching literacy ,beside those strategies you already alluded, so what are possible effective strategies can teachers use in teaching literacy?.

Interviewee: In teaching literacy, apart from this strategies I think ee one other strategy could be that learners form groups, ee study groups.

And In those study groups they assist one another to to read. So I mean, reading groups If we constitute reading groups learners would be able to teach one another how to read. Perhaps you find that may be they can learn better when they are taught by their peers than by the teacher. May be they can understand their peers more than their educators. So I think that strategy can also work.

Interviewer: Will that strategies help teachers to improve the performance of learners in literacy, in overcrowded classroom, the one you already mentioned now?

Interviewee: jah, I think it can help because you find that in an overcrowded classroom you don't have the opportunity to check all the learners, to pay attention to all the learners due to that overcrowding. So if they are in group's maybe group of ten then it will be much easier, if they experienceproblems then you can then chip in, maybe the group leader can notify the educator that this are the challenges that we face in our group, so and so is still struggling then you can then be able to pay attention to those learners in that sense.

Interviewer: In overcrowded classroom do, do you have enough resources?

Interviewee: Ah! We do have enough resources at our school, but they are not 100% enough because some of materials are not there, but most of them are available

Interviewer: Do you use only books for to teach this learners literacy or you have other resources outside from the prescribe books from the department, do you have other resources you are using?

Interviewee: AA this other resources we just develop them ourselves. We have developed charts and other posters we put them but they are not from the department, we just develop ourselves.

Interviewer: What about the issue of the printing media, have you ever use printing media to assist this learners for to to improve literacy, I'm referring to the issue of newspaper?

Interviewee: cough cough, sorry. Jah, we sometimes use them like I indicated early on sometimes we can just take article from newspaper and we give a learner a chance to read out

The rest of the school during morning devotion so that is how and even in the classroom setup we do use a magazine maybe learners read article from magazine then we ask them questions from that particular text and they answer.

Interviewer: What have been done to address the challenge of overcrowding?

Interviewee: of overcrowding?

Interviewer: yes

Interviewee: As of now I don't know of strategy that they use

Interviewer: What has been done to address this challenge of overcrowded, it can be from the side of the department or from the school?

Interviewee: There are a few strictures that they have erected, so that they can ease the problem of overcrowding, but it still not enough, I think more has to be done to deal with this matter because it is a serious challenge indeed.

Interviewer: Thank you sir, that was final of our interview.

Interviewee: Ok, thank you very much.

Interviewer: I really appreciate you time

Interviewee: Ok, thank you very much.

Appendix D

Consent form

Email: machipi.m@webmail.co.za
Cell no: 0794542351/0785112159

P O Box 455
Duiwelskloof
0835
15 August 2018

Dear Colleagues

I am currently conducting research on **teaching literacy competencies to learners in overcrowded classrooms in Mamaila circuit, Mopani district**'. I have been granted permission by the Limpopo Department of Basic Education to conduct the research at primary schools in Mamaila Circuit, Mopani District. The following are activities pertaining to the interview process:

1. You will be interviewed for approximately 30 minutes. There is no known risk involved in the research.
2. There are no costs involved.

You are assured that your identity and responses to this interview will be regarded as extremely confidential at all times, and they will not be made available to any unauthorised user.

Should you have any queries or comments, you are welcome to contact me on the above cell numbers.

Matshipi M. G

CONSENT

In terms of the ethical requirements of the University of Zululand, you are now requested to complete the following section:

I _____ have read this letter and understand the terms involved.

On condition that the information provided is treated as confidential at all times, I hereby (MARK the appropriate section).

Give consent

Do NOT give consent that the results may be used for research purposes.

Signature : _____

Date : _____

Appendix E

Letter to District Office to request permission to collect Data

Enq: Matshipi M.G
Cell no: 0794542351 /078 5112159
Email: machipi.m@webmail.co.za

PO Box 455
Duiwelskloof
0835
03 May 2017

The District Senior Manager
Limpopo Department of Basic Education (Mopani District)
Private Bag x 578
Giyani
0826

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR RESEARCH

- I am currently conducting research on **‘Teaching of literacy competencies to learners in overcrowded classrooms in the Mamaila circuit, Mopani district’** and would like to request your permission to collect data from primary schools of Mamaila Circuit.
- I am presently attached to the School of Education at the University of Zululand.
- I would like to assure your department that there will be no risk involved during the data collection process. Prior arrangements with the principals of schools will be made to ensure that there is no disruption in the daily activities of the schools. I would like to indicate that I shall conduct myself with great diligence and professionalism throughout the data collection exercise.
- The following are my other particulars in full:
Institution: University of Zululand
Degree: Masters
Student no: 201759998
Thanking you in anticipation.

Regards

Matshipi M.G (Mr)

Letter from the province granting permission to collect data

Appendix f



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ref: 2/2/2 Enq: MC Makola PhD Tel No: 015 290 9448 E-mail: MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za

Matshipi MG
PO Box 455
Duiwelskloof
0835

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: “TEACHING LITERACY COMPETENCIES TO LEARNERS IN OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS IN MAMAILA CIRCUIT, MOPANI DISTRICT ”.
3. The following conditions should be considered:
 - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
 - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the schools concerned.
 - 3.3 The conduct of research should not anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
 - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.
 - 3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MATSHIPI M.G

CONFIDENTIAL

Cnr. 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489, POLOKWANE, 0700
Tel: 015 290 7600, Fax: 015 297 6920/4220/4494

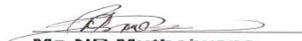
The heartland of southern Africa - development is about people!

3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

4 Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.

5 The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes.


Ms NB Muthelwana
Head of Department

21/05/17
Date

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MATSHIPI M.G

CONFIDENTIAL

Appendix G



ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Certificate Number	UZREC 171110-030 PGM 2018/497						
Project Title	TEACHING LITERACY COMPETENCIES TO LEARNERS IN OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS IN MAMAILA CIRCUIT, MOPANI DISTRICT						
Principal Researcher/ Investigator	MG Matshipi						
Supervisor and Co-supervisor	Prof AP Kutame			Mr BT Gamede			
Department	Social Science						
Faculty	Education						
Type of Risk	Med risk: Data collection from people						
Nature of Project	Honours/4 th Year		Master's	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Doctoral		Departmental

The University of Zululand's Research Ethics Committee (UZREC) hereby gives ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project. The Researcher may therefore commence with data collection as from the date of this Certificate, using the certificate number indicated above.

- Special conditions:**
- (1) This certificate is valid for 2 years from the date of issue.
 - (2) Principal researcher must provide an annual report to the UZREC in the prescribed format [due date- 28 May 2019]
 - (3) Principal researcher must submit a report at the end of project in respect of ethical compliance.
 - (4) The UZREC must be informed immediately of any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the documents that were presented to the meeting.

The UZREC wishes the researcher well in conducting research.


Professor Gideon De Wet
Chairperson: University Research Ethics Committee
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Innovation
28 May 2018

CHAIRPERSON
UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND RESEARCH
ETHICS COMMITTEE (UZREC)
REG NO: UZREC 171110-30
28 May 2018
RESEARCH & INNOVATION OFFICE

Appendix H

Letter to circuit Manager

Enq: Matshipi M.G

P o Box 455

Cell no: 0794542351 /0785112159
Duiwelskloof

0835
29.05.2018

The Circuit Manager
Mamaila Circuit Office
P/Bag x903
MOLOTOTSI
0827

Dear Madam

CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON “TEACHING LITERACY COMPETENCIES TO LEARNERS IN OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS IN MAMAILA CIRCUIT, MOPANI DISTRICT”.

I'm conducting a research on **“teaching literacy competencies to learners in overcrowded classroom in Mamaila circuit, Mopani District** “towards M.Ed. degree of the University of Zululand.

Through this research I hope to determine strategies for teachers on how to teach literacy competencies in overcrowded classrooms in Mamaila Circuit.

I intend visiting five schools within your circuit for interview and later observe the records such as learner's books and results for term 1 and 2 on literacy. It will be of great pleasure if I could be assisted with my research during the period of July ending September 2018. Assurance of anonymity is guaranteed.

Teachers will be interviewed on their own free will.

Kindly find the attached copies of the following:

1. Ethical clearance certificate.
2. Permission to conduct research from Provincial Education Department.

In anticipation, please accept my sincere appreciation for your willingness to help me.

Yours faithfully

29.05.2018

letter from circuit manager
Appendix I



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION**

Enq : Makhuvha L.C
Tel No : 015 310 6015/16/17

31 May 2018

P O Box 455
Duiwelskloof
0835

Dear, Mr Matshipi M.G

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY

The above matter alluded.

1. You are here by granted permission to conduct your research at your selected Primary Schools; Nakampe, Phakeng, Jamela, Lebaka and Nokane.
2. We therefore plea with you that your research should not interfere with the lessons, you must make proper arrangement with the principals of the schools so that the lessons are not interrupted.
3. Will be sure to inform the principals of the schools about your request in time.
4. Upon completion of your sessions with the school you must inform the office of the circuit manager.

We wish you the best luck during your research and your studies, and we hope that the information that you will gather will be relevant and helpful.


CES/Circuit Manager (Dr Makhuvha L.C)

31/05/2018
Date

The Department of Education - development is about people

MAMAILA CIRCUIT

Private Bag 903 Molototsi 0827 Tel: 0153106014/15/17 Fax: 0153106016
"Working together we can do more in providing quality education"
Education is a pre-condition for development

Appendix J

Letter to school Principal

Enq: Matshipi M.G

Cell no: 0794542351 /0785112159

P o Box 455

Duiwelskloof

0835

29.05.2018

The Principal

Dear Madam

**INVESTIGATION INTO TEACHING LITERACY COMPETENCIES TO LEARNERS
IN OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS IN MAMAILA CIRCUIT, MOPANI DISTRICT.**

I'm making investigation into teaching literacy competencies to learners in overcrowded classroom in Mamaila circuit, Mopani District towards M.Ed. degree of the University of Zululand.

Through this research I hope to determine strategies for teachers to use to teach literacy competencies to learners in overcrowded classrooms in Mamaila Circuit.

I intend visiting your school for interview and later observe the records such as learner's books and results for term 1 and 2 on literacy and should be most grateful if you would help me with this part of my investigation sometimes during July to September 2018.

Teachers will be interviewed on their own free will.

May I assure you that the survey is anonymous and is designed mainly to obtain overall data.

In anticipation, please accept my sincere appreciation for your willingness to help me.

Yours faithfully

Matshipi M G