CHALLENGES FACED BY EDUCATORS IN THE TEACHING OF READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN CLARE ESTATE DURBAN

By

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A mini-dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Education in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology) in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Zululand.

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DECLARATION

I, Serishma Gopie (Student Number: 201426752) hereby declare that the mini dissertation **CHALLENGES FACED BY EDUCATORS IN THE TEACHING OF READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN CLARE ESTATE DURBAN** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of references.

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Researcher's signature   Date

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For the greatness of possibilities are endless and the covert desire to aspire in order to inspire is manifested in each of us. This vocation is fuelled by a number of contributing influences, with this being divulged, I would like to place on record that this study would not have been possible without the assistance of the following persons, who had inspired and assisted me in the completion of this project:

ABSTRACT

There is universal concern with regard to learners' low reading levels (Klapwijk & Pretorius, 2016). Reading is one of the fundamental skills that learners need to master in their early school years of formal schooling in South Africa. Educators are expected to lay a good foundation of reading skills for the learners at this phase so as to build a strong learning foundation (DoE, 2011). Poor or incorrect teaching methods during these years may have an adverse effect on a learners' schooling career. Teaching reading is a complex process in the classroom as educators are faced with challenges, which may result negatively in the learner's capacity to understand and comprehend. Literature indicates that a large number of learners who cannot read and understand the text are mostly in the foundation phase. Thus, it was vital for the researcher to embark on this study. The aim of the study was to explore the phenomenon of the challenges educators experience in teaching reading in the foundation phase in Clare Estate Durban.

The objectives of the study were: to explore some of the challenges foundation phase educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners; to determine the approaches that are used by educators to teach reading and lastly to explore some of the strategies that can be used to improve learners' reading skills. This study employed a qualitative research methodology; a case study research design was used to gain an in-depth understanding of educators' experiences in the teaching of reading. Information was derived by the use of focus group interviews. The study sample comprised of thirteen foundation phase educators.

The findings revealed that some of the challenges that educators faced in teaching reading skills to learners in the foundation phase were as follows: language barrier, large class size, lack of parental involvement and the use of phonic and look and say approaches, which do not necessarily benefit all learners in class. The study explores strategies that could be used to improve reading in the foundation phase as well as the findings and recommendations towards minimising the challenges faced by educators teaching reading in the foundation phase.

KEY CONCEPTS: challenges, educator, teaching, reading, foundation phase.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the fundamental skills that children need to master in their early school years if they are to be successful in life (Singh, 2011). The early school years of formal schooling is referred to as the foundation phase which comprises of grades R, 1, 2 and 3 (Mbatha, 2014). The foundation phase is identified as the most significant phase in a child's life because this is where teaching and learning begins. Educators are expected to lay a solid foundation of reading skills for the learners at this phase so as to build a strong learning foundation (DoE, 2011). Poor or incorrect teaching methods during the foundation phase may have a detrimental effect on some of the learners when formal reading has commenced. This is due to the fact that school achievement is dependent on knowing how to read, comprehend what was read and apply the content to future learning (Asiabani & Roohani, 2015). Unlike the ability to speak, the one to read is not innate, and a learner does not obtain it simply by watching and listening to others reading. "If learners do not acquire the skill to read, comprehend, write and use language to communicate their thoughts and perceptions, their favourable conditions for a fulfilling and rewarding life are seriously compromised" (Fisher & Frey, 2010, p. 104). Fisher and Frey (2010) suggest that if learners are unable to read then they will not be able to: read directions on the road; read a recipe; read an insert in a medicine container or fill in an application form.

As a Foundation Phase educator in a mainstream school in Clare Estate Durban, the researcher has observed that most educators in school are experiencing challenges in teaching reading to second language learners and as a result for some, the use of one teaching method does not benefit all learners. Sometimes learners are so rushed through a reading programme that they are unable to master all the required skills thus, they lag behind. Class teaching can have the effect that a group tempo is maintained without considering individual differences. Some educators have no knowledge of the learners' individual reading problems and how to rectify them. The majority of our learners come from a low socio economic background and are second language learners. Learners have to attend additional classes during the

school break or after school to compensate for their deficit in their reading skills. The problem of educators experiencing challenges in teaching reading to second language learners is constantly raised in the Foundation Phase meetings and School Management Team (SMT) meetings in the school.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Teaching learners to read is the core occupation of any foundation phase educator (Mudzielwana, 2014). The problem of learners who cannot read and understand a text is a major challenge in South Africa (Mudzielwana, 2014). A study conducted by Mudzielwana (2014) on research-based instructional reading strategies to enhance reading ability in learners suggests that a large number of learners who cannot read and understand the text are mostly in the foundation phase. Mudzielwana (2014) points out that this situation is a cause of concern since the foundation phase is the beginning of education. Hence, if the foundation phase is not strong enough, the learners will not be able to further their studies. This is an indication that South Africa is plagued with a vast reading problem.

Research findings continue to highlight major apprehensions about the significance of reading in primary schools (Hugo, 2010). In 2006 and 2011 the South African Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) indicated low levels of reading ability across the country (Smit & Zimmerman, 2014). A follow-up PIRLS study was conducted in 2011 that revealed a similar image. The results of 1,000 Grade 3 classes showed that, eight out of every 10 learners achieved less than 50% for language skills and mathematics, and 35% of Grade 3 learners nation-wide attained between 0% and 34% for literacy, which encompassed reading (Swart, Swartz, & Le Roux, 2014; Hugo, 2010). Research in South Africa indicates that learners' reading skills remain poorly developed and this follows from primary school through to tertiary level (Pretorius, 2015).

Educators play a fundamental role in teaching reading to learners. Moats (as cited in Mudzielwana, 2014) states that learning to read is not natural or easy for most

learners as reading is an acquired skill. This implies that classroom instruction is very important for the development of teaching reading skills. Educators ought to assist and encourage learners to read effectively in the class room (Mudzielwana, 2014). In order to achieve this educators have to design effective activities for teaching reading in the class, because a successful teaching of reading in the class depends largely on the proper planning of reading lessons (Mudzielwana, 2014).

Over the past few years, foundation phase educators have been experiencing challenges in implementing the curriculum due to the lack of in-depth training and changing of curriculums which has led to the uncertainty of planning and structuring lessons (Sethusha & Makeleni, 2014). Condy and Blease (2014) state that many young learners have a reading problem and that there has been a general misunderstanding about the role of the teacher in teaching reading, either by using the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) or the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS).

Learning to read is dependent on the teaching of basic reading skills in the foundation phase (Di Orio, Cofini, Vittorini, & Cecilia, 2014). Mudzielwana (2014) states that teaching reading is a complex process that requires highly skilled professional educators to teach learners how to read. According to Moats (as cited in Mudzielwana, 2014), reading is regarded as a fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends. Teaching Treasures (as cited in Singh, 2011) claim that there are two best known approaches used to teach reading in the foundation phase, namely look and say method and the phonic approach. The look and say method requires learners to recognise words and, those words are made of phonic sounds (Singh, 2011). The look and say method is a unique methodology whereby learners compose and read their own sentences even before they can write. Phonics involves the teaching of initial sounds to written letters and applying that knowledge in recognizing words and reading (Singh, 2011). Research shows that learners, who are taught phonics directly and systematically in the early grades, achieve higher scores on reading achievement than learners who do not receive this instruction (Sethusha & Makeleni, 2014; Singh, 2011).

Research indicates that educators are not playing their role in teaching learners to read (Di Orio et al., 2014; Mbatha, 2014). N'Namdi (as cited in Mudzielwana, 2014) states that the educator's role is to employ various reading strategies that lead to a child's ability to read. The Department of Education (DoE, 2008, p. 16) states that "reading strategies are ways of solving problems that a learner may come across while reading". For example, learners might not know the meaning of a word or they might find a section of the text difficult to understand. When these situations arise, learners should have a strategy for knowing what to do. Mudzielwana (2014) argues that learners learn best when educators employ a variety of strategies to model and demonstrate reading knowledge, strategy and skills. Reading strategies such as shared reading, reading aloud, oral reading, guided reading and independent reading are used to teach learners to read. Educators were under the misconception that teaching reading to learners required them to merely supervise learners as learners would teach themselves to read. Furthermore, many educators merely did not know how to teach reading (Hugo, 2010; DoE, 2008). From research reports, it appears that teaching of reading in the foundation phase is not effective with the result that many young learners attending South African schools have a reading problem (Hugo, 2010).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Hulme and Snowling (2013) argue that learners who do not learn to read in their first and second grades are likely to be at risk of academic failure and dropping out of school. In Grade One, learners are taught to read so that by the end of that first year of formal schooling most learners are able to read an age-appropriate book, unaided. In schools, formal reading instruction takes place in Grade One, but once learners reach Grade 3 no further reading instruction is given within the classroom (Condy & Blease, 2014; Hugo, 2010; Singh, 2011). At that point, it is assumed by the educators that the learners have mastered the basics of reading.

This study has been influenced by the problems encountered in the foundation phase by Grade Three educators of this school with the reading incompetency of learners as well as the overall poor level of learners' performance. At school level,

Grade Three educators blame Grade One educators for not teaching learners the elementary reading skills. Grade One educators indicated that they were confused and no longer knew what, how or when to teach reading. However, not much is known around the kind of challenges educators experience in the foundation phase in teaching reading. It is against this background that the researcher aimed to investigate the challenges educators experience in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase at a primary school in Clare Estate, Durban.

Therefore the research questions that the present study attempted to answer are as follows:

1.3.1   What are some of the challenges that foundation phase educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners?

1.3.2   What approaches are used by educators to teach reading?

1.3.3   What are some of the strategies that can be used to improve learners' reading skills?

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to explore challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase in Clare Estate, Durban.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study were:

1.5.1 To explore some of the challenges foundation phase educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners.

1.5.2 To determine the approaches that are used by educators to teach reading.

1.5.3 To explore some of the strategies that can be used to improve learners' reading skills.

1.6 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

For better understanding of this study, the following terms will be explained:

1.6.1 Challenges

The term challenges refer to problems encountered by educators in teaching reading to learners in the foundation phase (Singh, 2011). In this study, the term challenges will be used interchangeably with the word problems.

1.6.2 Educator

The term educator refers to "any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons at an education institution or assists in rendering education services or support services provided by or in an education department" (National Education Policy Act 27 0f 1996, p. 2). In the context of this study, the focus is on foundation phase educators. Foundation phase educators are professionally trained to teach learners from Grade R to 3.

1.6.3 Teaching

Hornby (as cited in Singh, 2011, p. 35) regards teaching as "an activity of instruction that transfers information and skills". It includes the strategies, methodologies and procedures that are used when conveying knowledge to the learners.

1.6.4 Reading

The Department of Education (DoE, 2008) defines reading "as an ability to recognize and say each separate word in a text using knowledge of letters and sounds". It further states that reading is the ability to get meaning from the text. This implies that reading is a complex process, which involves many skills that need to be developed. Educators play a vital role in teaching learners how to read (DoE, 2011).

1.6.5 Foundation Phase

The term 'Foundation Phase' refers to the "first phase of the General Education and Training (GET) band and includes Grade R (the reception year) and Grades 1, 2 and 3" (DoE, 2002, p. 54). It is a four-year phase, with the most important subjects taught at this level being: Languages (Home language and first additional language), Mathematics and Life Skills (DoE, 2011).

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study was of paramount importance. The researcher adopted an interpretative paradigm and a qualitative research approach, which generated answers to the research questions. The research problem determined the method. The study in nature was a case study since it aimed at exploring the challenges experienced by educators in teaching reading in the foundation phase. Focus group interviews were used to collect the data.

1.7.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher has employed a case study as a methodology which was conducted at one specific school in Clare Estate, Durban. A case study was considered a suitable option for this study because it enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges educators experienced in teaching reading skills to second language learners in the foundation phase. The design also assisted the researcher to gain a broader understanding of the participants and the nature of their problems. This research design provided answers to the research questions that were explored. The researcher obtained detailed information from the viewpoint of the participants. A number of previous studies used the same research design (Condy & Blease, 2014; Dorasamy & Reddy, 2014; Mbatha, 2014; Sethusha & Makeleni, 2014).

1.7.2 SAMPLING DESIGN

Purposive sampling was used as the selection procedure in this study. According to Kumar (2014, p. 244), purposive sampling is being defined as "a sampling method which focuses on the researcher's judgement as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study". Foundation phase educators were selected as they appeared to be a very rich source of information. The study sample consisted of 13 educators from the foundation phase.

1.7.3 DATA COLLECTION

In this study, focus group interviews were used to collect data. Kumar (2014) state that focus group interviews, are used to obtain data on participants' experiences, perceptions and understanding of a group of people who have some experiences in common with regard to a situation or event. The researcher used this type of interviews in order to ensure that the aims of the study could be achieved. A focus group interview is a situation where a focus group moderator (researcher) keeps a small group of 13 educators focussed on the discussion on the challenges they experience in teaching reading in the foundation phase.

1.7.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher transcribed the data and arranged the transcriptions into file folders for easy access, thereafter the researcher used a coding system as well as themes and sub-themes to analyse it. The researcher used the recordings made during the interviews to analyse the data, quoting the participants' responses verbatim in order to confirm or make a statement, which gave substance to the findings. The researcher ensured that all ethical issues were adhered to, that is, all participants were made aware of anonymity, privacy, purpose of the study, debriefing and the limitations on the requirements of confidentiality. All participants signed the informed consent forms and were informed about any risk factors in the study and of the fact that there involvement in this study was voluntary. They were made aware that they could terminate at any stage if they so wished.

1.7.5. VALIDITY OF FINDINGS

Schumacher and McMillan (2010, p. 351) state that *"The absolute 'Truth' is not possible, but validity can be enhanced, so that the research is as trustworthy as possible"*. Validity refers to the accuracy of the inferences, interpretations or actions made on the basis of scores (Creswell, 2008). In order to ensure the findings and interpretations throughout the data collection and analysis are accurate and trustworthy, the researcher used the following strategies:

1.7.5.1   Triangulation of data as evidence from different sources will be used to build and justify coherent themes. The term triangulation refers "to the notion of fixing an object from two independent locations in order to increase the accuracy of the siting" (Richardson, 1996, p. 194).

1.7.5.2   Member-validation has been used to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through returning the draft report, specific description or themes to participants to enable them to check or comment upon the interpretation, as this will determine their accuracy (Richardson, 1996). The researcher has ensured that validity of the instrument was checked by the people who are experts in the field of research.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study would shed light on some of the challenges that educators are faced with in teaching reading in the foundation phase. Such information could inform relevant stakeholders about the impact this has on learners' performance in school. The results of the study would assist the School Management Team to implement the strategies in the school as well as, a workshop would be conducted to teach educators some of the effective methods to teach reading at the foundation phase. In addition, improved understanding of the problem would enhance the effectiveness of remedial interventions in this school. It would also highlight and eliminate some challenges that educators face in implementing these strategies in

school. It would also contribute to the body of international knowledge about problems educators are experiencing in the foundation phase so as to address them. Since the majority of the foundation phase educators are faced with this problem it has therefore, been considered essential that a study of this nature should be undertaken in order to strengthen intervention strategies.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE MINI-DISSERTATION

This dissertation has been divided into five chapters:

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter discussed the background to the study, problem statement with an explanation of how the researcher came to the idea to conduct it, research questions, aim of the study, data analysis and ethical consideration.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviewed the relevant literature on reading, challenges educators experience in teaching reading, the factors influencing reading, approaches for teaching reading, as well as the theory that underpins this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH PARADIGM, APPROACH, DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

This is the core chapter of the study and this chapter will discuss the paradigm which the study employs as well as the research approach and design. For this study, the researcher adopted an interpretive paradigm and a qualitative research approach which is built on an emerging design. A case study was employed as a methodology. This chapter also discusses the methods, which were used to collect data (focus groups interviews).

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter discusses the analysis of data and results of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of what this study entailed and the researcher discusses the findings, limitations, and recommendations of the study.

1.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a brief background to the study, problem statement with an explanation of how the researcher came to the idea to conduct it, research questions, aim of the study, data analysis and ethical consideration. The following chapter will focus on reviewing the relevant literature on reading, challenges educators experience in teaching reading, the factors influencing reading, approaches for teaching reading, as well as the theory that underpins this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter focusses on reviewing relevant literature related to this study from the international, national and local perspectives. International literature was reviewed to be cognisant of the approaches that are used worldwide. Furthermore, local perspectives were vital in understanding the current state of reading in South African schools; challenges educators experience in teaching reading; some of the approaches that are, used to teach reading as well as theories that underpin this study.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

Reading is perceived as an ability to recognize and say each separate word in a text using knowledge of letters and sounds. Reading is further described as the ability to get meaning from the text (DoE, 2007). This indicates that reading is a complex process that encompasses many skills that need to be developed. Allington (2013) describes reading as a technical process since we read letter by letter and word by word. Furthermore, Allington (2013) states that reading is automatic information processing for one to decode each word and comprehend it as one builds understanding of the sentence through combining their individual meaning. Similarly Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008) point out that reading is one of the most prominent ways of receiving ideas, information and stories. Reading without understanding however, has no value unless acted upon. In order to attribute meaning the reader must form a picture in his mind of the concept. Thus, Allington (2013, p. 16) describes reading as "a process in which information from the text and the reader's background knowledge act together to produce meaning".

Teaching reading is a complex process and requires highly skilled professional teachers. It seems that reading is described differently by various scholars. Reading is regarded as the fundamental skill upon which formal education depends (Mudzielwana, 2014). Despite the perceived importance of reading and considerable efforts of educators and other stakeholders across the country, research findings indicate that, there are many educators who experience challenges in teaching reading in the foundation phase (Condy & Blease, 2014; Hlalethwa, 2013; Ssentanda, 2014; Zentall & Lee, 2012). More research needs to be done in South African schools to advise individual schools about the teaching of reading in the foundation phase (Hugo, 2010).

2.3 CURRENT STATE OF READING IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

A growing body of research indicates a deepening crisis in our schooling system inextricably linked to the low levels of literacy being achieved by learners at all levels of the education system (Goodman, Gary & Wood, 2014; Ssentanda, 2014). In 2001 and 2004 the National Department of Education (DoE, 2008) 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 fell below on 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%. The Department of Education (DoE, 2008) stated that large numbers of learners simply do not read. There is evidence that learners attending South African schools have reading problems (Hugo, 2010). From research reports, it seems as if the teaching of reading in the foundation phase is not effective resulting in many young learners attending South African schools having a reading problem (Hugo, 2010). Hugo (2010, p. 135) argued that "learners who do not learn to read in their first and second grades are likely to be at risk of academic failure and/or dropping out of school".

As a means to improve the teaching standards and to assess, educators' performance the Annual National Assessment (ANA) was implemented (Rensburg,

2015). The Department of Education (DoE, 2014) conducted an Annual National Assessment (ANA) in September 2014 for learners in Grades 1-3 in Language and Mathematics. According to the diagnostic report, key findings were that learners could not read with comprehension, wrote words and sentences that were incoherent; lacked the ability to make inferences from the given information in a text and were unable to spell frequently used words correctly. The most striking weakness is the inability of learners to read with understanding (DoE, 2014). In the foundation phase more than 60% of learners achieved 50% or more in English. The statistics indicate that "there are still challenges regarding the teaching of reading in South Africa schools beginning in the foundation phase" (Rensburg, 2015, p. 111).

2.4 CHALLENGES EDUCATORS EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING READING

As a developing country, South African educators are faced with challenges in the sphere of education which have a direct impact on the literacy level of learners (Dorasamy & Reddy, 2014). Mudzielwana (2014) conducted a study on the teachers' perceptions on foundation phase learners' low reading performance which revealed that reading competency level is in crisis in the foundation phase. Mudzielwana (2014) infers that there is a need to gain a better picture on the challenges experienced by educators in the foundation phase.

Sethusha and Makeleni (2014) conducted a study on the experiences of foundation phase teachers in implementing the curriculum; the study revealed that foundation phase teachers experience challenges with regard to the language of teaching and learning. According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2007, p.1), "home language instruction is encouraged in the first four years of formal schooling". However, this is not always attained as learners are taught in a language (English) which is not their home language. On such occasions, learners are incapable of using the richness and depth of their mother-tongue knowledge to enhance the reading experience and this affects reading competence.

Learners' level of language development is a crucial feature in their ability to read. Language skills are directly associated with success at school and are separated into the following categories: vocabulary, correct language usage, correct sentence construction, language comprehension, reading and spelling. Mudzielwana (2014) points out that the home language education policy specifies that learners should start learning at school in their home language until Grade three. In most schools, the language of instruction changes from African languages to English, which means that more than 80% of South Africans learn in a language different from their home language (Howie, Venter & Van Staden, 2008). Hinkel (2005) stated that for second language reading to take place the reader must have developed proficiency in that language.

Studies have shown that ineffective teaching approaches and weak subject knowledge are contributing to poor quality teaching and learning (Mudzielwana, 2014; Sethusha & Makeleni, 2014). The National Reading Strategy (DoE, 2008, p. 10) states that "most educators in South Africa have an under-developed understanding of teaching reading". Many educators simply do not know how to teach reading, the use of one teaching method does not benefit all learners. Class teaching can have the effect that a group tempo is maintained without considering individual differences. Some educators have no knowledge of the learners' individual reading problems and how to rectify them. Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008) suggest that educators should know a variety of reading appraoches and not resort to one method of teaching.

The findings of studies by Condy and Blease (2014) and Mudzielwana (2014) attest to the challenges educators experience in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase such as poor availability of reading books; large classes; lack of parental involvement; inappropriate approaches used to teach reading and insufficient time allocation. The findings also revealed that the learners' ability to read does not depend on the circumstances but on the dedication shown by the teacher and the experience of the teacher in teaching reading in the foundation phase.

In a study conducted by Mahdavi and Tensfeldt (2013) in Sweden and Finland, there were many factors that contributed to low literacy achievements. Among the factors were poor availability of books; a lack of political and social discussions in the home; large classes, learners' personal interest and attitudes. A study conducted by Dorasamy and Reddy (2014) revealed similar findings that having little or no parental support, as well as the challenges of educators who are not proficient in English as a medium of instruction and large class sizes, also contribute to the low literacy levels. South Africa's performance in terms of the international reading tests, as well as the national literacy tests, has confirmed the seriousness of the problem and the urgency of finding solutions.

2.5 EDUCATORS' ROLE IN TEACHING READING

Educators play a vital role in the teaching and learning process. Research indicates that educators are not playing their role in the teaching and learning process (Di Orio, Cofini, Vittorini, & Cecilia, 2014). Weaker learners will always lag behind if help is not given to them. Over the past few years, foundation phase educators have been experiencing challenges in implementing the curriculum due to the lack of in-depth training and changing of curriculums which has led to the uncertainty of planning and structuring lessons (Sethusha & Makeleni, 2014).

Condy and Blease (2014, p. 38) state that "many young learners have a reading problem and that there has been a general misunderstanding about the role of the teacher in teaching reading, whether by using the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) or the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS)". Teaching of reading in the foundation phase is not effective with the result that many young learners attending South African schools have a reading problem (Hugo, 2010).

Many educators in South Africa are regarded as having an under-developed understanding of teaching literacy, reading and writing (DoE, 2008). It is highlighted in the National Reading Strategy (DoE, 2008) document that the majority of educators lack knowledge and skills of teaching reading; they end up using one

method which may not suit the diverse learners' learning styles. Reading has been a priority in the Department's educational renewal agenda, the evidence of this is the introduction of the ELITS Reading Campaign which was run concurrently with the implementation of the Curriculum 2005 in schools (DoE, 2008).

There has been a misconception about the role of the teacher in teaching reading in Curriculum 2005 and in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). According to Sethusha and Makeleni (2014), reading is a competence that teachers have to actively teach since learners do not simply 'pick up' reading skills. In support of what is cited in the DoE (2008), the National Reading Strategy, provides for approximately ten hours per week for the teaching of reading and writing in the foundation phase, since reading should be enforced in early phases of learning. The National Reading Strategy (DoE, 2008) further gives guidance on a balanced approach to the teaching of literacy and five critical areas of reading that should be taught, namely, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension (Pretorius, 2015).

The NCS takes as its starting point the same position as the International Reading Association which states that: There is no single method or single combination of methods that can successfully teach all children to read. Therefore, teachers must have a strong knowledge of multiple methods for teaching reading and a strong knowledge of the children in their care so that they can create the appropriate balance of methods needed for the children they teach (DoE, 2002). The overview of the NCS has made literacy an important feature of life-long learners: "The learner is able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts" (DoE, 2002, p. 10). This statement confirms the concern of the curriculum designers that without the ability to read one cannot be regarded as a life-long learner. There is no clear pathway for progress in learning to read unless the teacher has a plan for teaching the learners how to read for various reasons. Teachers need to know how to help learners achieve satisfactory reading levels (DoE, 2002).

2.6 APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES IN TEACHING READING

Learning to read is dependent on the teaching of basic reading skills in the foundation phase (Di Orio, Cofini, Vittorini, & Cecilia, 2014). Sethusha and Makeleni (2014) state that there are two best known methods and approaches used to teach reading in the foundation phase, namely look and say method and the phonic approach. The look and say method is a unique methodology whereby learners compose and read their own sentences even before they can write. It requires learners to recognise words and derivative phonic sounds. Phonics involves the teaching of initial sounds to written letters and applying that knowledge in recognizing words and reading. Research shows that learners, who are taught phonics directly and systematically in the early grades, achieve higher scores on reading achievement than learners who do not receive this instruction (Sethusha & Makeleni, 2014).

Mudzielwana (2014) states that learners learn best when educators employ a variety of strategies to model and demonstrate reading knowledge, strategy and skills. These are strategies such as shared reading, reading aloud, oral reading, guided reading and individual or independent reading. In a shared reading session, the educator reads with the class or group using a large storybook that has big, bold print (DoE 2008). Learners share the reading task with the teacher and gradually learners take over the task of reading (DoE 2008). Shared reading involves a child and teacher or other adult reading together, in one-to-one interaction, from a book. It is a practice frequently used in early years' classrooms and it is a practice commonly used by many parents at home. In shared reading the educator works with the whole class.

Group guided reading is regarded as one of the key components of a balanced language programme (DoE 2008). It involves using carefully selected books at the learners' instructional level. Department of Basic Education (DoE 2011, p. 11) refers to group guided reading as "an ability-group reading teaching strategy where all the members in the group read the same text under the direction of the teacher and should take place every day". Guided reading involves the educator in a session with

a group of between 6 and 10 children. The educator plans the lessons to include a range of word-attack strategies that children will learn to apply when meeting challenges in texts. The 'text talk' between educator and learners (and learners with each other) is central to this approach. During this time the teacher should not be interrupted by other learners who are doing independent activities. Each group session should be between 10 and 15 minutes long with two groups reading with the educator every day (approximately half an hour per day in total).

Independent reading is important in reading comprehension. During this activity, learners learn to apply the comprehension strategies independently that they were taught during guided reading (Mudzielwana, 2014). According to the Department of Education (2008), independent reading is a purposeful planned activity. The educator has a structured daily time during which learners associate themselves with books.

Reading aloud is another approach that can have a positive effect on the development of reading comprehension (Mudzielwana, 2014). Read-aloud times should be a well-planned activity and not impromptu (Mudzielwana, 2014). Teale (as cited in Mudzielwana, 2014) stated that the educator should be well prepared, read to the whole class or to a small group, using material that is at the listening comprehension level of the learners.

2.7 THEORIES THAT UNDERPIN THIS STUDY

Research indicates that there are contributing factors that impact the reading process (Condy & Blease, 2014; Mbatha, 2014; Singh, 2011). Condy and Blease (2014) state that there were many factors that contributed to the challenges educators experienced in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase such as contextual factors (socioeconomic environment, parental involvement and family configuration) and scholastic factors (second language learners and large classes). In order to explore the phenomena of the challenges educators experience in

teaching reading in the foundation phase, a number of theories of teaching reading that frame this study and their connection to educators are briefly outlined below:

Schunk (2014, p. 3) defines theory as "a scientifically acceptable set of principles offered to explain a phenomenon". According to Schunk (2014), a theory is about thinking and reflecting; it is a preliminary idea or model that needs to be verified to determine its validity and to explain a specific phenomenon. The purpose of teaching reading in the foundation phase should be viewed in the broader context of the 'knowledgeable economy' (Mudzielwana, 2014). This implies that it is imperative for foundation phase educators to have the theoretical knowledge about strategies for teaching reading to learners. According to Mudzielwana (2014), this knowledge will assist educators to teach learners with the necessary skills in order for the learners to become competent readers in the changing world.

Constructivism is perceived as a theory of knowledge in which humans create knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas (Hlalethwa, 2013). This theory is based on the premise that learners construct their own understanding of the world through individual experiences and this enables them to solve problems in different situations (Di Orio, Cofini, Vittorini & Cecilia, 2014). A constructivist assumption is that educators should not teach in the traditional way but rather should structure a reading lesson such that learners are actively involved, provide support and guidance rather than lecturing and place emphasis on reflective teaching (Schunk, 2014). Educators can focus on effective communication, meaning, comprehension and respect for language in the classroom (Mudzielwana, 2014). Mudzielwana (2014) asserts that the constructivist approach has implications for teaching reading comprehension because in facilitating learning, the educator must take the cultural context of the learners into consideration as it influences their thinking and actions.

Piaget's theory of cognitive development (as cited in Mudzielwana, 2014) is based on this premise that learning is a process of internal construction. The theory of cognitive development relates to this study because learners must construct knowledge in their own minds through the guidance of educators. Mudzielwana

(2014) suggests that educators must teach learners to acquire self-regulatory competence by observing and listening to their explanations. The theory helps educators to understand that learners at this level have reached a new level of self-development that allows them to understand some of the ways in which they are related to people.

Through interaction with the educator and other persons, and during play, learners become able to understand the physical and the social world. Here, during reading comprehension, realistic fiction may encourage learners to interact with characters who are involved in a conflict situation (Mudzielwana, 2014). Knowledge about this stage will assist the educator to understand that the learners are ready to listen to stories and to read about real-life heroes and stories which move between the past and present, such as legends. The knowledgeable educator is aware that learners in this stage begin to apply logic to concrete experience, so that they begin to move beyond one-dimensional thinking. Concerning reading, this enables learners to relate one event to a system of interrelated parts. They gradually start perceiving an event from the beginning to the end and from the conclusion to the beginning. It is therefore important that the environment should be rich to encourage learners to learn and reason about what they read (Mudzielwana, 2014).

Psycholinguists hold the view that reading is seen as a questioning or problem solving process in which readers search for meaning (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008). Psycholinguists state that reading should be learnt with the intention of gaining meaning and understanding right from the beginning of the reading experience (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008). In this view learners are introduced to reading books or text straight away. Educators will introduce learners to a variety of reading materials which they engage with in a variety of ways to elicit the development of various skills.

Reading is comprehension driven, with the reader bringing prior knowledge to the text, as learners make predictions and question the text. Meaning is most important and forms a foundation for reading. Flanagan (as citied in Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008) argues that educators who hold to the psycholinguistic view believe that

communication of meaning is the purpose and heart of language learning. Psycholinguistics believed that reading is a meaningful whole, rather than a set of sub skills (Flanagan as citied in Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008).

Behaviourism views reading as a process of seeing and saying words and asserts that reading occurs through imitation, repetition and reinforcement (Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008). Schunk (2014) argues that educators who subscribe to this view believe that the reading process involves the learning of certain skills, which have to be acquired chronologically. According to the behaviourists, reading is a process that moves from the parts to the whole which could be described as a bottom up process. One first learns to separate letters and their characteristics, then diphthongs and other letter units that represent sounds, thereafter, single words, phrases and sentences, and lastly the meaning of the text. The reader must first master the mechanical and technical aspects of written language before attention can be paid to comprehension and understanding, and once the learners have mastered these skills they will be able to read (Swart, Swartz & Le Roux, 2014).

2.8 CONCLUSION

The majority of previous studies have focused on the foundation phase, with the rationale that educators display a lack of concern in some schools to reach the most challenged learners and this, coupled with the dissatisfaction over the slow pace of change, creates a sense of urgency (Condy & Blease, 2014; Hugo, 2010). Therefore, the present study will fill in this gap. This study is one of the first to explore the challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the Foundation phase in Clare Estate, Durban. This chapter discussed the relevant literature that the researcher has read in connection to this study, discussing different scholars' arguments. The following chapter will discuss the research approach and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the researcher sought to investigate the challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase, the research paradigm, research design, data collection methods, population and sample and data analysis are described in this chapter. This chapter also describes the rationale behind the methodology used and how the research was conducted.
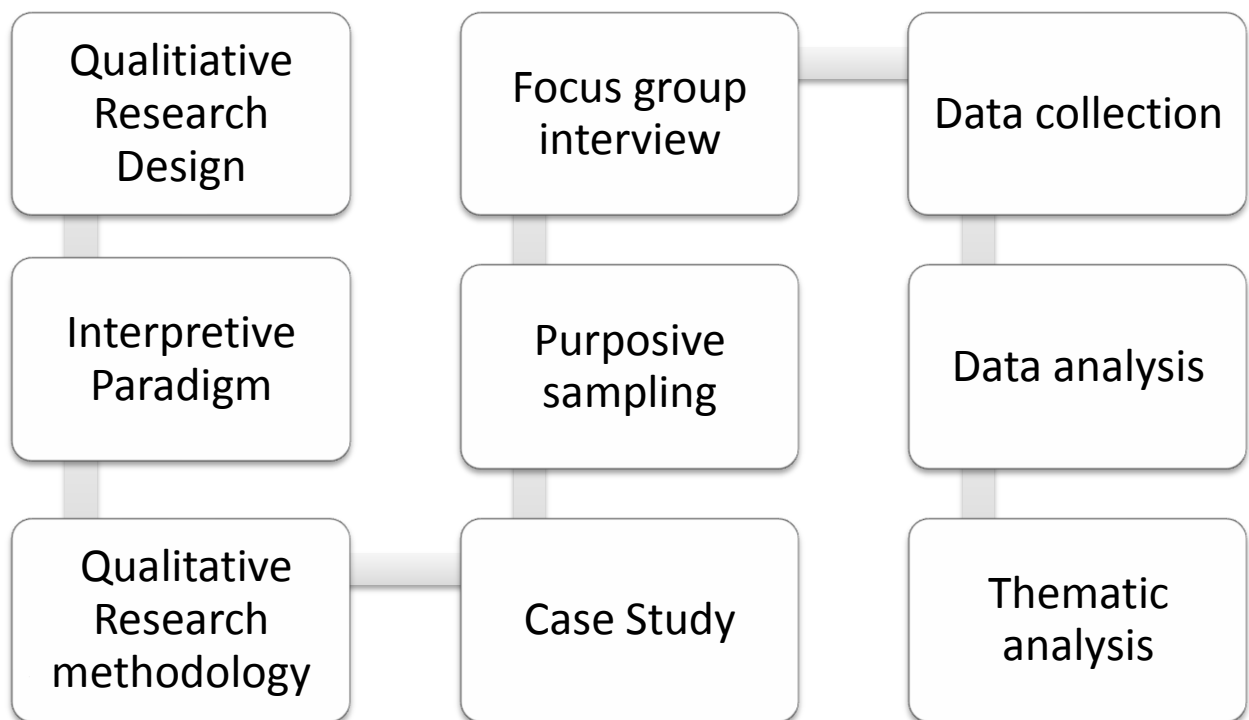
Figure 3.1.1: Diagram illustrating the qualitative process used in the study.

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

For this study, the researcher has adopted an interpretive paradigm and a qualitative research approach which was built on an emerging design. A case study has been employed as a methodology which was conducted at one specific primary school in Clare Estate, Durban with foundation phase educators as participants. In order to create a holistic understanding of the problem being studied, a case study was chosen as the appropriate research design. Case study research was an appropriate approach to use in an educational setting as it is made up of a number of individuals: in this case, parents, teachers and learners who all have reciprocating effects on one another. It is not a closed system and therefore outside influences can and generally does impact on the research participants, the phenomenon under study and the environment in which the research is conducted. These three aspects are interrelated and therefore cannot be studied independently (Creswell, 2008).

A focus group was used for the data collection. For focus group engagements the researcher used semi-structured interview questions. By employing focus group interviews as a methodology, the researcher has gained an in depth understanding of the challenges educators experience in the foundation phase in teaching reading. The sample for this research was foundation phase educators.

A reiteration of the aims for this study indicates the direction to be followed. The objectives of this study were**:**

3.2.1 To explore some of the challenges foundation phase educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners.

3.2.2 To determine the approaches that are used by educators to teach reading.

3.2.3 To explore some of the strategies that can be used to improve learners' reading skills.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The research paradigm in academic research is essential as it provides the researcher with a framework to shape and validate design decisions (Hlalethwa, 2013). The researcher adopted an interpretivist paradigm, which according to Creswell (2008) is an alternative view to the positivist view of knowledge developed about social worlds as only obtainable objectively. Hlalethwa (2013) infers that the social worlds are not easily perceivable because they are formed by each individual in a different way. It is altered for each one of us; with words and events carrying different meanings in every case therefore they cannot be studied sufficiently using the methods of physics or chemistry.

Blease and Condy (2014, p. 41) state that "an interpretivist paradigm aims to represent, describe and understand particular views of the educational world". The researcher has selected interpretivism as the paradigm for the study as it enabled immersion in the research context, talking to participants, interrelating face to face with them, while taking note of their thoughts, feelings and ideas so as to avoid misconstrued information.

3.4 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Creswell (2008, p. 14) defines qualitative research as that "which explores attitudes, behaviour and experiences through methods such as interviews or observations in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their setting". Schumacher and McMillan (2010, p. 323) defines qualitative research as "a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of the participants, asks broad and general questions, collects data consisting largely of words or text from the participants, then describes analyses and conducts an enquiry in a subjective, biased manner". The researcher has chosen a qualitative research approach as the researcher was interested in exploring some of the challenges faced by educators in the foundation phase in the teaching of reading skills to learners.

3.5 RESEARCH METHOD

Creswell (2008, p. 45) defines research methodology as "a study of a research process in all its broadness and complexity". It embraces the numerous methods and techniques that were employed, the rationale that lies behind the use of such methods, the limitations of each technique, the role of assumptions and presumptions in selecting methods and techniques, the influence of methodological preference on the type of data analysis employed and the subsequent interpretation of findings. The researcher has used the following research methodology and technique to collect data for the study:

3.5.1. Focus group interviews (semi-structured)

In this study, focus group interviews were conducted with foundation phase educators. Kumar (2014) states that focus group interviews are used to obtain data on participants' experiences, perceptions and understanding of a group of people who have some experiences that are common with regard to a situation or event. A focus group is a situation where a focus group moderator (researcher) engages a small group, in this case, 13 educators on the discussion about the challenges they experience in teaching reading in the foundation phase. The researcher used semi-structured interviews to gain a detailed picture of participants' beliefs, perceptions, or accounts about a particular topic. By selecting a focus group interview, the researcher has gained in-depth understanding of some of the challenges that foundation phase educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners and determine what methods and approaches educators used to teach reading. This has allowed the researcher to explore what strategies can be used to improve learners reading skills.

The strengths of conducting a focus group are that it is useful for exploring ideas and concepts, allows probing, allows quick turnaround as well as it can examine how participants react to each other. However, the weakness of focus group interviews is that they are expensive and time-consuming. Thus, data analysis can be time consuming for open-ended items (Creswell, 2008). The researcher informed the

potential participants beforehand that they would be studied. The researcher has used various data recording strategies such as audiotape recorder to acquaint the researcher with the educators in the foundation phase through discussions and engagements. The researcher plans to keep audiotapes with participants' confidential information for the recommended period of 5 years (Kumar, 2014).

3.6 SAMPLING DESIGN/ PARTICIPANTS

The sample for this research was taken from all foundation phase educators as the teaching of reading appears to be a common problem. The researcher proposed a minimum sample size of 13. The number of participants in the focus group was determined by: the number of educators teaching reading in the foundation phase; the number of educators willing to participate in the study. There were thirteen classes in the foundation phase: 2 Grade R, 4 Grade ones, 4 Grade two's and 3 Grade three classes. Since, there were thirteen educators teaching reading in the foundation phase therefore, all educators voluntary participated in this study. According to Schumacher and McMillan (2010, p. 651), the "logic of the sample size is related to the purpose, the research problem, the major data collection strategy and the availability of information-rich cases". Previous studies (Condy & Blease, 2014; Sethusha & Makeleni, 2014) have used purposive sampling methods in their research of experiences of foundation phase teachers in teaching reading. Purposive sampling was used to select participants in this study. Purposive sampling indicates that participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them the holders of the data needed for the study (Creswell, 2008).

Creswell (2008) stipulates that this type of sampling is chosen for a specific purpose and is used in order to access 'knowledgeable people'. Therefore, foundation phase educators have been specifically chosen for this study as they are information rich. Purposive sampling decisions involve the settings, incidents, events and activities to be included for data collection (Creswell, 2008). The most accessible school was chosen.

3.7 CREDIBILITY AND CONSISTENCY

In this study the researcher employed triangulation of data collection methods to ensure the credibility and consistency of the qualitative data (asking lecturers, colleagues and educators to verify analysis and interpretation of their comments). One staff member in the foundation phase who was not involved in the focus group interviews checked the process of the study. The researcher used an audio tape recorder to provide accurate data and evidence (Creswell, 2008). The researcher transcribed the audio recordings into text data and returned the transcripts to the participants to check the accuracy of the data. In addition, participants were quoted verbatim in order to give substance to the findings.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Creswell (2008, p. 345) describes "qualitative data analysis as being primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns among them". Furthermore, Creswell (2008) states that data analysis is a continuing cyclical process that is integrated into all phases of qualitative research.

The steps for analysing the data have been adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006) and Kumar (2014). The researcher has organised the data into file folders and developed a table of sources to help organise the materials by categorizing them into grades R,1,2,3 and number of participants in each grade. The researcher transcribed the data obtained through focus group interviews, converting audio-tape recordings into text data. In order to make sense of the text data the researcher used the steps below, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The researcher tried to familiarise herself with the data by trying to gain a sense of all the transcripts reading, checking the transcripts back against the recordings for "accuracy". Thereafter, the researcher has generated a list of ideas from the data and assigned codes. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 19) refer to codes as "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon". The researcher then divided the text

data into segments of information and assigned code-words that accurately described the data. According to the Kumar (2014), coding data is an essential process: firstly, the text data is divided into segments; the segments are then labelled with codes; thereafter, the codes are examined for redundancy and lastly the codes are devised into themes. The researcher followed the coding process and devised the codes into themes.

The researcher identified the main themes. Thereafter, the researcher carefully analysed descriptive responses given by participants to each question asked. From these responses, the researcher then developed broad themes that reflect these meanings. Secondly, the researcher assigned codes to the main themes. Thirdly, the researcher then classified responses under the main themes. The researcher used a computer programme NVivo for undertaking this thematic analysis. Lastly, the researcher integrated themes and responses into the text of the report (Kumar, 2014). The diagram below is a schematic representation of how the data was processed.
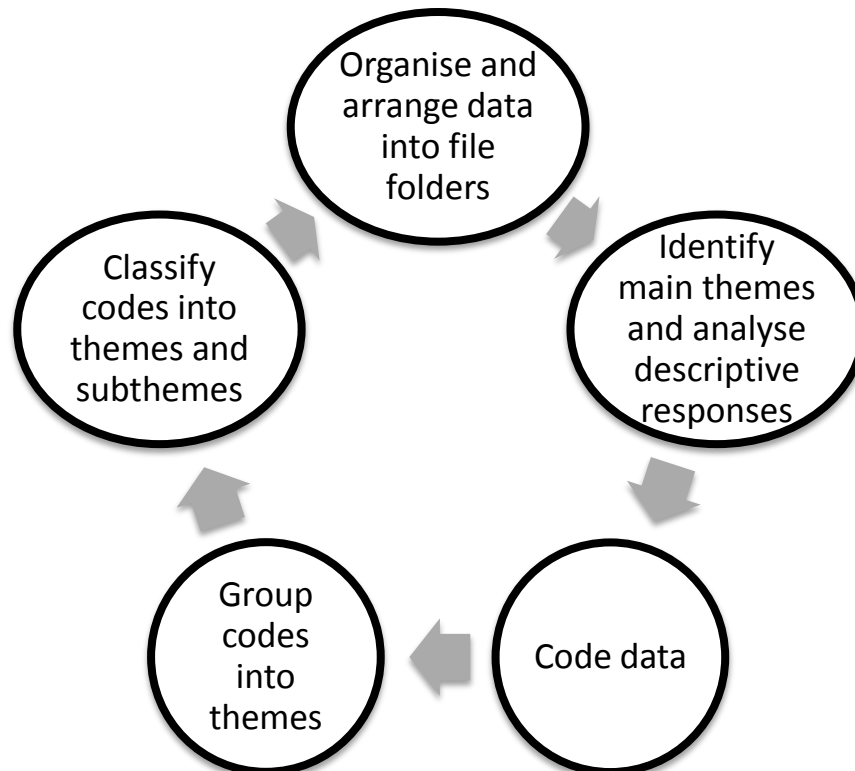

Figure 3.8.1: Schematic representation of the data analysis process.

3.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethics are the principles and guidelines that aid us to maintain the possessions we value (Schumacher & McMillan, 2010). According to Kumar (2014, p. 282), "all professions are guided by a code of ethics that has developed over the years to accommodate the changing ethos, values, needs and expectations of those who hold a stake in the professions". The following ethical issues that arise from this study are listed below:

3.9.1 Informed consent

According to Kumar (2014), in every discipline it is considered unethical to collect information without the knowledge of participants, and their expressed willingness and informed consent. Consent is generally obtained by requesting subjects to sign a form that shows understanding of the research and agreement to participate (Schumacher & Macmillan). The participants for this study were foundation phase educators. The researcher issued participants with a written consent form informing them about the nature and purpose of the study that participation is voluntary and those participants could freely choose to stop participation at any point in the study. Participants were also informed that, by participating in this study they were contributing towards guiding the school management team and the educators of this school to compile a set of guidelines on the effective approaches of teaching reading skills which will improve the academic performance of learners. Written consent would also eliminate all unobtrusive field observations and informal conversation.

3.9.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

All participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of their responses, obtained during the focus group discussion. The researcher informed participants that the research results would be published in the form of main themes and participants responses would be classified under the main headings. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records would be maintained as participants' names and identity would not be disclosed in this study. Pseudonyms were used to protect

identification of participants and maintain anonymity and preserve confidentiality. This also encouraged honest responses from participants and potentially reduced the amount of socially desirable answers that were given (Allan, 2011). The researcher plans to keep audiotapes with participants' confidential information for the recommended period of 5 years (Kumar, 2014). The researcher has ensured that the audiotape containing participants' confidential information was stored safely. The data was encrypted with a password to avoid unauthorised people from gaining access to the information. Participants would receive feedback in the form of workshops regarding the results obtained during the study.

3.9.3 No harm or risk to participants

Schumacher and Macmillan (2010, p. 119) state that "participants can be harmed in a physical or emotional manner". In the social sciences, harm to participants will be mainly of an emotional nature, but is difficult to predict and to determine, with far-reaching consequences for participants. To avoid harm to the participants the researcher informed them beforehand about the impact of the investigation and offered them opportunities to withdraw if they so wished. The researcher also informed participants that counselling would be provided to them during the course of this study. Participants would have been affected emotionally during the focus group discussion by revealing their feelings about the challenges they faced in teaching reading.

3.9.4 Debriefing the respondents

A debriefing session is one during which participants have the opportunity to work through their experiences and its aftermath after the study. The researcher debriefed the participants by discussing with them their feelings about the study. This took place in a supportive and therapeutic environment.

3.10. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a detailed description of the research paradigm was presented: the research design, sampling, data collection methods and data analysis. The researcher also illustrated how evidence was constructed by integrating multiple data collection methods. This study therefore, forms the pillars on which the following case study rests. The following chapter will present the data obtained, and analyse it through the theoretical framework established in the literature review.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents empirical findings based on the key purpose of the study, namely understanding the challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase. The aim was to make new discoveries and to confirm the existence of previously hypothesised phenomena. The researcher therefore employed a case study, which was conducted at one specific primary school in Clare Estate, Durban. Focus group interviews were used as a methodology in order to gain an in depth understanding of the challenges educators experience in the foundation phase in teaching reading.

4.2 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH SCHOOL

School A (Grade R-7) is situated in Clare Estate, Durban. It has an enrolment of appropriately 1200 learners and 36 educators including 8 Management team. Learners attending this mainstream school hail from diverse backgrounds including middle to low socio-economic status. A percentage of the school's population, travel from areas such as Umlazi, Ntuzuma, KwaMashu, Pinetown, and Chesterville.

A qualitative research methodology utilising focus group interviews with 13 foundation phase educators was used in this study. Educators shared their experiences and challenges of teaching reading in the foundation phase. The following table shows the number of participants per grade who participated in the focus group interview.

GRADE	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
R	2
1	4
2	4
3	3

Table 4.2.1: Number of participants per grade who participated in the focus group interview

4.3 RESULTS

4.3.1 ANALYSIS OF DATA

The researcher transcribed the focus group interviews via thematic analysis whereby patterns in the data were identified and compared. Mbatha (2014) reiterated that qualitative analysis encompasses of accounting for and explaining of the data. It entails making sense of the data in terms of participants' definition of the situation. Furthermore the analysis also involved identifying recurring themes and patterns emerging from the data and synthesising the main ideas. The findings consisting of experiences and viewpoints shared by educators about their challenges faced in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase are presented below:

Themes	Sub-themes	
Theme one	Challenges of teaching reading in the foundation phase	• Language barrier • Large classes
Theme two	Reading approaches	Approaches in teaching reading: • Phonics • Look and say method • Whole word method
Theme three	Resources used in teaching reading	• Flash cards • Pictures • Big books

		• Sentence strips
Theme four	Strategies for improving reading skills	• Reduce class size • Extra classes • Parental involvement

Table 4.3.1: Data organised into themes and sub-themes

4.3.1.1 **Theme one**: Challenges of teaching reading in the foundation phase

What are some of the challenges that foundation phase educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners?

Sub-theme: Language barrier

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9 and 13 revealed that the challenges they faced in teaching reading in the foundation phase was language barrier. Majority of the learners in school were speaking isiZulu and English was taught as their home language and isiZulu as their first additional language. Participants 3,4,5,6 and 12 expressed their concerns regarding learners not being taught in their mother tongue, which poses a huge language barrier, as educators are unable to communicate with their learners.

Participant 5 in Grade 1 aptly stated that:

> "*Majority of our learners are second language learners. Pronunciation is a major problem with our learners as they speak isiZulu at home. We are unable to understand when they communicate to us in isiZulu. Learners are unable to pronounce words in English. The language of the resources at school, e.g. books, posters, generally does not match the home language of the learner*".

Participant 1 indicated that learners were unable to pronounce words which posed a barrier to reading. Phonic sounds differ in isiZulu and English. Participants 2, 5, 6, 10 and 11 indicated that mother tongue is a bridge for learning and that reading should be taught in a language in which learners are proficient. Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, and 13 attested that in addition to better understanding of what was taught, learners show that they gained information when mother tongue was used, unlike when English is used.

Sub-theme: Large classes

For effective teaching of reading to take place, educators required small classes. Educators expressed concerns regarding large classes.

Participant 6 in Grade 1 mentioned that:

> "*Due to large numbers of learners in class it poses a huge challenge for learners to engage in group guided reading. Learners have to read via choral reading as a whole class, it is impossible to call two groups per day as per CAPS curriculum. Once a group is called other learners are not completing their independent activities because they need my assistance all the time, thus they tend to become disruptive in class*".

Participant 11 in Grade 3 stated that:

> "*Learners are of scaffolding abilities and require individual attention. As an educator, I am unable to give individual attention to weaker learners, due to the large numbers in class. Learners do not meet the minimum requirements and they are progressed to the next grade as learners in the foundation phase are not allowed to fail. No exposure and knowledge of English but accepted from grade two upwards*".

Participants 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, expressed their concerns regarding some of the challenges they encounter in teaching reading in the foundation phase. They felt dissatisfied with their learners who performed poorly in reading.

4.3.1.2 **Theme two** - Reading approaches

What approaches are used by educators to teach reading?

Sub–theme: Approaches in teaching reading

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 revealed that the approaches they used to teach reading were look and say method; phonic method, and word and picture. Participants were asked how they taught reading in their respective grades (R-3). One of the focus group participants shared how she taught reading in her grade R class.

Participant 2 in Grade R stated that:

> *"I teach reading in my class by going back to the teaching of the breakthrough core words. I introduce words with a picture. On a daily basis I flash words on flashcards before learners engage in the text. Learners use the core words to construct sentences".*

Participant 5 in Grade 1 stated that:

> *"I use the phonic method to teach reading to my learners. This method is based on teaching the sounds that match letters and groups of letters of the English alphabet. Learners learn the names of the letters and the sounds they make. Once they learnt the letter sounds they begin to blend two letters together to make simple words then three letters and so forth".*

Participant 9 in Grade 2 stated that:

"Firstly I read from books and create an interest in books. I use flash cards with the flash words that the learner is going to encounter in the book. I teach learners the basic single sounds beginning with A up to Z. Then I teach them vowel blends a e i o u. Learners are able to encode and decode words example at- bat, cat, rat. To teach reading a lot of pictorial representation is used. The learner learns by association that is, they look at a picture and a word and relate it to each other".

Participant 11 in Grade 3 stated that:

"As a grade 3 educator I use flashcards before a learner precede to read. I make reading cards with a picture and a sentence. I give learners worksheets with pictures and words and then sentences. My learners read so beautifully".

Participants 1, 2 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 12 mentioned that the main methods of teaching reading in the foundation phase are the alphabetical method, phonic method, the whole-word or look and say method and the sentence method.

Participant 10 in Grade 2 stated that:

"Not all learners learn in the same way. Some learn better by being analytical, looking at parts first and then combining them to make the whole. Others learn holistically, first seeing things as a whole and then later analysing its parts. Some learn visually and some aurally or tactically. In the classroom, the educator must use many different approaches and methods so that all learners have an opportunity to learn to read".

4.3.1.3 **Theme three-** Resources used in teaching reading

What are some of the resources used to teach reading?

Sub-themes: Flash cards / sentence strip/ big books

Participants emphasised the use of flash cards to be highly beneficial in facilitating reading. The constant repetition is not limited to enhancing reading skills but improves articulation of phonics, spelling, and sentence construction.

Participant 6 in Grade 1 explained that:

> "*Flash cards are used to introduce new vocabulary that the learner will encounter in the text. An educator will pronounce the word written on the flash card; thereafter the learner repeats the word. Flash cards are essential as learners are able to recognise the words that they introduced to*".

Sentence strips play a vital role in teaching reading in the foundation phase.

Participant 9 in Grade 2 revealed that:

> "*After reading a text to the learner, the educator will write a sentence from the text on a cardboard strip and learners must recognise and read the sentence from the text*".

Big books form an effective resource as shared reading amongst leaners improves comprehension skills.

Participant 12 in Grade 3 explained that:

> *"During a shared reading lesson, big books are used to teach the whole class reading. Big books allow the educator to teach learners: how to read the text, the expression and intonation suited to the text and word level or sentence-level features that are in the text".*

4.3.1.4 **Theme four-** Strategies for improving reading skills.

What are some of the strategies that can be used to improve learners' reading skills?

Sub-theme: Reduce class size

Participants expressed that for effective teaching of reading to take place in the foundation phase, the most useful strategies to improve learners' reading levels and skills are as follows:

Participant 4 in Grade 1 stated that:

> *"Having smaller classes will ensure effective teaching of reading and learning taking place. If the class size is not reduced, then each class educator should be allocated a class assistant to assist large class size. Having a class assistant, the educator will be paying more attention to the weaker learners who require more assistance in reading".*

Participants 3, 5, 8, 7, 9, 11, 12 and 13 agreed with participant 4, to have smaller classes, as educators felt they would be able to give individual attention to learners experiencing problems in reading. Due to large class size, participants felt they were unable to assist weaker learners who were unable to read and thus learners lag behind. Educators felt they gave precedence to quantity rather than quality of teaching.

Sub-theme: Extra classes

Participant 12 stated that they would provide support for second language learners who were experiencing difficulty in reading by ensuring the following:

> *"During the morning, break time or after school, educators can assist learners in reading".*

Participant 13 in Grade 3 mentioned that during extra classes they will:

> "*Begin with breakthrough words. Teach words (flash). Then teach sentence construction and ask learners to read. Make sure that the word or sentence is represented pictorially. Pictures assist the learner as they are able to associate the picture with the word".*

Learners must be able to construct their own sentences with the help of the educator. This can be done using breakthrough words. Reader worksheets will be photocopied and given to learners to learn at home.

Sub-theme: Parental/ care givers involvement

Participants highlighted the role of parents/ caregivers who serve as an integral part in the development of a child.

Participant 2 in Grade R mentioned that:

> *"It is critical that parents provide learners with many different learning games which are playful and fun by including nursery rhymes and rhyming games to expose learners to the sounds of their language, lap-time reading and bed-time reading".*

Participant 8 in Grade 2 mentioned that:

> *"It is critical that learners observe their parents reading and learn why reading is so important in our lives. Parents can make all of the language interactions in the home positive and enjoyable experiences".*

Participants 1, 5, 7, 10 and 12 indicated that "parents must provide their children support and encouragement at all times to foster healthy relationships. Reading at home should be practiced on a daily basis as this will attribute to the sustainable skills development in the child's schooling career".

4.4 CONCLUSION

The main aim of the study was to explore challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase in Clare Estate, Durban. In this chapter the researcher presented and analysed the data gathered through the use of focus group interviews. The researcher further analysed the data by focusing on the following important areas: the methods they use to teach beginning reading; the resources they use to teach beginning reading; challenges or problems they face with the teaching methods they currently use and the learners' ability to read; and teachers' choice of the methods; and learners' activities.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY OF STUDY

The previous chapters have all in their different slants attempted to answer the research questions. The objectives of the study were to explore some of the challenges foundation phase educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners; to determine the approaches that are used by educators to teach reading and to explore some of the strategies that can be used to improve learners' reading skills. The results of focus group interviews have been analysed in relation to the aim of the study and the significance of the findings. In this chapter, the findings are summarised under each of the objectives of the study and the researcher discusses the findings, limitations, and recommendations of the study.

5.1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that the present study attempted to answer were as follows:

5.1.1.1   What are some of the challenges that foundation phase educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners?

5.1.1.2   What approaches are used by educators to teach reading?

5.1.1.3   What are some of the strategies that can be used to improve learners' reading skills?

5.1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to explore challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase in Clare Estate, Durban.

5.1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study were:

5.1.3.1 To explore some of the challenges foundation phase educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners.

5.1.3.2 To determine the approaches that are used by educators to teach reading.

5.1.3.3 To explore some of the strategies that can be used to improve learners' reading skills.

5.1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology in this study is qualitative research methods, and they involved research design, sampling design, data collection, and data analysis.

5.1.4.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The researcher employed an interpretive paradigm for this study. This design was considered most appropriate for determining educators' views on problems in teaching reading in their school without the manipulation of variables and provided answers to the research questions.

5.1.4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

A case study was employed as mode of inquiry. In order to gain an in-depth understanding about some of the challenges educators faced in teaching reading in the foundation phase, the researcher conducted a case study at one primary school.

5.1.4.3 SAMPLING DESIGN

The researcher obtained information from foundation phase educators. Purposive sampling of participants was done in this study as a selection procedure. The study sample comprised of thirteen foundation phase educators. The sample was selected, as they were information rich. Previous authors have detailed this sampling procedure (Condy & Blease, 2014; Dorasamy & Reddy, 2014; Mbatha, 2014).

5.1.4.4 DATA COLLECTION

The data was collected through focus group interviews. Focus group interviews allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by educators in teaching reading. Semi-structured questions were utilised to probe educators in order to get clarity on specific issues regarding the challenges they faced in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase. The researcher used audiotapes to record the data which allowed her to familiarise herself with the educators in the foundation phase and promoted more thorough understanding of the discussions and engagements.

5.1.4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher organised the data into file folders and developed a table of sources to help organise the materials by categorising them in grades and number of participants in each grade. The data was transcribed and organised into themes. The researcher integrated the themes and responses into the text of the report. This procedure allowed the researcher to gain a sense of the whole by reading all the transcriptions and field-notes carefully, jotting down ideas as they came to mind.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

5.2.1 Findings with regard to objective number one.

The first objective was to explore some of the challenges foundation phase educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners.

The findings of the present study revealed that the challenges educators' experience in teaching reading skills to learners was language barrier, large class size, and lack of parental involvement. These findings also support previous researchers (Condy & Blease, 2014; Makeleni, 2014; Sethusha & Mudzielwana, 2014). Challenges educators experienced in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase were: language of teaching and reading, large classes, lack of parental involvement and inappropriate approaches used to reading. Literature revealed that home language instruction is encouraged in the first four years of formal schooling. However, this is not always attained as learners are taught in a language (English) which is not their home language. Language skills are directly related to success at school and are divided into the following categories: vocabulary, correct language usage, correct sentence construction, language comprehension, reading, and spelling. A study conducted by Mudzielwana (2014), revealed that the home language education policy specifies that learners should start learning at school in their home language until grade three. Very important finding and stipulation.

5.2.2 Findings with regard to objective number two.

The second objective was to determine the approaches that were used by educators to teach reading.

Findings revealed that the methods educators used to teach reading were the phonic, look and say methods. According to Sethusha and Makeleni (2014), these are the two best-known approaches used to teach reading in the foundation phase. The look and say method is an extraordinary approach whereby learners compose

and read their own sentences even before they can write. It requires learners to recognise words and derivative phonic sounds. Phonics involves the teaching of initial sounds to written letters and applying that knowledge in recognizing words and reading. Research shows that learners, who were taught phonics directly and systematically in the foundation phase, achieve higher scores on reading achievement than learners who do not receive this instruction (Sethusha & Makeleni, 2014). However, Mudzielwana (2014) alludes to the fact that learners learn best when educators employ a variety of strategies to model and demonstrate reading knowledge.

Piaget's theory of cognitive development (as cited in Mudzielwana, 2014, p. 434) states, "learning is a process of internal construction". According to this theory, learners must construct knowledge in their own minds through the guidance of educators. Using one method cannot be beneficial to a learner. Every learner learns in a different way therefore, educators should employ a variety of strategies. The constructivist approach alludes to the fact that educators should not teach reading in the traditional way but rather actively involve learners in the reading process (Schunk, 2014).

5.2.3 Findings with regard to objective number three.

The last objective explored some of the strategies that can be used to improve learners' reading skills.

The findings revealed that the strategies to improve learners' reading skills were to reduce the class size and include parental involvement. The parents or caregivers of young learners play an integral role in guiding them in reading. Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008) argue that parental involvement can either be very successful or it can lead to stress at home, depending on how the educator approaches the matter.

Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008) is of the opinion that if the learner is told to read something to their parents, it must be to show off their progress the learner should

be able to show their parents how much success he or she has already had with reading. The cooperation between parents and the educator is extremely important for learners to develop their reading skills. Cairney (as cited in Joubert, Bester & Meyer, 2008) asserts that this collaboration can be strengthened through mutual communication and by giving parents access to the curriculum.

The findings of reducing the class size were irrelevant due to the school under study being a mainstream school that caters for learners from poor socio economic backgrounds and the Department of Education (DoE, 2011) has the authority to increase or decrease the number of learners in the school. Literature revealed that some schools in South Africa were closed down due to enrolment being very low.

5.3 SCHOOLS' LANGUAGE POLICY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Other important matters to reflect on in this study- bridging the gap.

5.3.1. What are the provisions of the language policy with regards to teaching reading to second language learners?

In comparison with the literature review in chapter 2 and results obtained in chapter 4, language is regarded as a barrier in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase. A study conducted by Mudzielwana (2014) revealed that the home language education policy specifies that learners should start learning at school in their home language until grade three. This is an important finding as this is not attained in the school and learners are taught in a language (English) which is not their home language. According to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, Section 6, "a learner in a public school shall have the right to instruction in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable". This simply means that all learners must be offered at least one language. The learner can go to a school where either English or isiZulu is offered. It depends on the medium of instruction offered by the school. In some cases, both languages are offered, one as home language and the other as first additional language. Learners must score 50% in English and the other language 40%.

5.3.2. School's compliance with the policy?

School A complies with the policies of the Department of Education (DoE, 2002). The school has English as their home language and isiZulu as the first additional language. English has been chosen as the language of instruction for the following reasons:

1. It is the language preference of the majority of the learners and parents of this school.
2. Other schools in the vicinity also use English as the only medium of instruction.
3. Educators at school A are competent and qualified to teach in English.

Historically, Afrikaans was a compulsory second language until the promulgation of new education legislation (DoE, 2002). The school used to have Afrikaans as their first additional language previously. However, they have discarded it and replaced it with isiZulu. This change was embraced due to being CAPS compliant (DoE, 2011). IsiZulu has been chosen as the first additional language since the school has competent and qualified educators to teach the language. The school has a reading programme on Tuesday and Thursday to assist weaker learners.

5.3.3 What are some of the advantages/disadvantages of teaching reading to learners in their home language?

The findings of the present study revealed that teaching reading to learners in their home language would aid them to become more confident with their speech. Learners would feel more relaxed as learners would be able to communicate without inhibitions. Learners would be able to grasp the content of the subject as well as they would be able to assist each other. However, the disadvantage of teaching reading to learners in their home language is that learners would be unable to communicate easily to others who are different language speakers. English is the main language of communication (includes spoken or written) and is the main way in which people communicate in their daily lives.

According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2011), the policy prefers learners to have the first three years of schooling in their home language however, learners are confronted to switch to English as the language of learning and teaching in grade 4. Learners would learn the basic reading skills in their home language from grade R to 3, thereafter they would experience greater difficulty in the intermediate phase when English is introduced as the home language and they are introduced to readers that are in the advance level (Condy & Blease, 2014). According to Mudzielwana (2014), the gap between the foundation and intermediate are far greater and pose as a huge challenge for educators to teach basic reading skills to learners in the intermediate phase. Therefore, the foundation phase is regarded as the most critical phase in the learner's life where basic reading skills are inculcated.

5.3.4 What does the school do to meet the needs of the learners?

The school ensures that the needs of the learners are met by conducting extra reading lessons. This is incorporated in the timetable. These reading programmes are on Tuesday and Thursday. Learners are given homework – English is done at least twice a week. This is to supplement and is what is done in the class. Educators encourage peer teaching and mixed ability groups to teach reading.

5.4 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was achieved by exploring some of the challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase. However, the study sample of thirteen educators was drawn from one primary school in Clare Estate, Durban. This is a limitation of the study since the results do not represent the total population of educators experiencing challenges in teaching reading in South African schools, therefore the results cannot be generalised. The researcher selected the most accessible school as the site of study as this aided in being more cost effective. The school was also selected due its relevance and information rich participants.

A further limitation of the study was the instrument used to obtain information from educators. Focus group interviews were employed to obtain an understanding of some of the challenges that educators faced in teaching reading. The researcher has ensured that the validity of the instrument was checked by the people who were experts in the field of research. Employing focus group interviews has enriched the study, however due to a small sample size and obtaining information from only one school has limited the study to explore challenges faced by educators at other schools.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study on the challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase produced the following avenues for future researchers:

a) The present study has shown that educators' recommendations were drawn from one primary school; it would be proper to undertake the study in other schools to determine other educators' recommendations regarding the challenges faced in teaching reading in the foundation phase. The methodology could also be extended to incorporate quantitative and mixed methods to be able to generalize on findings.

b) There is an essential need to conduct workshops that will empower both parents and educators on how to teach learners reading in other schools. This workshop should be conducted within and outside the school environment.

c) There is a basic need to present a community-based programme that will encourage and empower parents to fully participate in their children's learning.

d) There is a necessity for the revision and redesigning of the school curriculum, teaching and learning approaches and the establishment of

sufficient teaching and learning support material in schools to provide for learners' learning barriers.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

Educators need to change their attitude and become supportive towards learners who are experiencing difficulty in reading. Educators must embrace the motto that every child can learn. According to the constructivist assumption, educators should not teach in the traditional way but rather should structure a reading lesson such that learners are actively involved, provide support and guidance rather than lecturing, and place emphasis on reflective teaching (Schunk, 2014).

Educators can focus on effective communication, meaning, comprehension and respect for language in the classroom (Mudzielwana, 2014). Mudzielwana (2014) points out that the constructivist approach has implications for teaching reading comprehension because in facilitating learning, the educator must take the cultural context of the learners into consideration as it influences their thinking and actions.

The best alternative or accommodation for teaching learners reading in the foundation phase is to use a variety of teaching methods to improve learners reading skills. Joubert, Bester and Meyer (2008), devises the following strategies to assist educators improving learners reading skills:

- The first strategy is labelling. Labelling is a worthwhile device only if it is made meaningful. When learners bring in toys, these may be labelled. Shelves in the classroom closet should be labelled to indicate places for various supplies: for example, clay, paint, scissors, pencils, paper. Learners' desks must also be labelled and they must be encouraged to learn the names of their classmates.

- The second strategy uses picture cards and tracing where fewer pictures are given at one time. As the picture side of each card is presented, the educator pronounces the word under it. The learner pronounces the word, and then

traces it with his or her finger. He/she will do this as many times as necessary to recognise the word shown without the picture.

- The third strategy is My Word Book. All the words the learner learns can be put into their vocabulary book, My Word Book. The learner may illustrate this book or pictures may be cut from other sources and pasted under each word to illustrate it.

- The fourth strategy is card drawing. The educator can print words needing practice. The cards are placed face down on the table. Learners in the group take turns drawing cards and reading the words printed thereon. If it is misread, a card is returned face down to the bottom of the pack. The winner is the person with the largest number of cards when the stack is gone.

- Lastly, phrase cards are found to be of great assistance in correcting the error of omission. Short, easy phrases should be used, such as "all day", "they ran", and into the "house". When these have been thoroughly learned, longer and more difficult phrases may be introduced. Parents should be encouraged to read stories to their children on a daily basis and a good reading atmosphere can be created by modelling good reading skills and habits. Parents should take their children and visit the library to enable them to select books that are of their interest. The easier the book, the greater are the learner's chances of success in reading. Parents must also encourage their children to read the newspaper and magazines, as this will increase their general knowledge.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This study aimed at exploring the challenges faced by educators in teaching reading in the foundation phase. This was a case study employed in one primary school in Clare Estate, Durban.

In chapter one, the background of the study as well as the significance of the study was explained. The problem and the research questions for the study were also identified and, the layout of all the chapters was provided. Thereafter in, chapter two, relevant literature regarding the challenges of teaching reading in the foundation phase was discussed. Chapter three discussed and the methodology that was used to conduct the research and was explained. Chapter four presented and analysed data. Lastly, chapter five discussed the findings, limitations and recommendations of the study. Foundation phase teaching is extremely important; without a strong scholastic background some children could be disadvantaged for their entire school career. Unless effective solutions are found to address both the systemic as well as the individuals' and/ or groups' foundation phase teaching problems, some learners will remain perpetual underachievers. In contrast, every child has a right to education and support.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: Application letter for permission to conduct the study

ATTENTION: THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Department of Basic Education

Province of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X9137

Pietermaritzburg

3201

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a Master's student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Zululand. My Supervisors are Prof P.T. Sibaya and Dr S.P Zulu. As part of my degree requirements, I am required to conduct a mini dissertation. I am currently planning to conduct research on the challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase. I am hereby seeking your permission to conduct this study at Primary School.

The aim of the study is to explore the challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase. The study plans to explore some of the challenges foundation phase educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners and to determine the methods and approaches that are used by educators to teach reading. The study will focus on foundation phase educators. The study will use semi-structured focus groups interview to generate data. The focus group interview will be tape recorded.

Response will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of actual name and the name of the school will not be mentioned in which the

participants are employed. The researcher will issue participants with a written consent form informing them about the nature and purpose of the study and participation is voluntary and that participants could freely choose to stop participation at any point in the study.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me on the following contact details:

Additionally you can contact my supervisors for any further information:
Prof P T Sibaya
Tel: 0359026634
Email: sibayap@unizulu.ac.za

Dr S P Zulu
Tel:0825133795
Email: zulusp@unizulu.ac.za.

Your permission to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

_____

Serishma Gopie

education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Dear Miss Gopie

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"CHALLENGES FACED BY EDUCATORS IN THE TEACHING OF READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN CLARE ESTATE DURBAN",** in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 23 September 2016 to 26 March 2018.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Connie Kehologile at the contact numbers below
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

(Please See List of Schools Attached)

Adv. MB Masuku
Acting Head of Department: Education
Date: 26 September 2016

...Championing Quality Education - Creating and Securing a Brighter Future

ANNEXURE C: Request to conduct research at primary school

Attention: The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a Masters student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Zululand. As part of my degree requirements, I am required to conduct a mini dissertation. I plan to conduct research on the challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase. I am hereby seeking your permission to conduct this study at your school. The purpose of the study is to explore the challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase.

The study plans to explore some of the challenges foundation phase educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners and to determine the methods and approaches that are used by educators to teach reading. The study will focus on foundation phase educators.   The study will use semi-structured focus groups interview to generate data. The focus group interview will be tape recorded.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefits that the participant may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.

The participant's identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s during and after the reporting process.

All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Pseudonyms will be used to represent the participant's name and the name of the school will not be mentioned in which the participants are employed.

Participation is voluntary which means the participant is free to withdraw at any time he/she so wishes without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on his/her part.

The focus group interview shall be voice recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview.

The participants will be contacted in advance about the interview date and time.

Should you require any information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisors. Our contact details are as follows:

Prof P T Sibaya
Tel: 0359026634
Email: sibayap@unizulu.ac.za

Dr S P Zulu
Tel:0825133795
Email: zulusp@unizulu.ac.za.

Thanking you in advance for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely

_____

Serishma Gopie

ANNEXURE D: Consent form for educators

<div align="center">

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION
(Participant)

</div>

Research project title "Challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase in Clare Estate Durban". Serishma Gopie (researcher) from the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to explore challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase in Clare Estate Durban.

2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate.

3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards guiding the school management team and the educators of this school to compile a set of guidelines on the effective approaches of teaching reading skills within the context of this study which will improve the academic performance of learners.

4. I will participate in the project by consenting to be in the focus group interview. A focus group is a situation where a focus group moderator (researcher) keeps a small group of educators focussed on the discussion. No video recordings will be made but only a tape recorder will used for the interview.

5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of main themes, and classify participants responses under the main headings. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research. Pseudonyms will be used such that it would not be easy to identify participants.

7. I will receive feedback in the form of workshop regarding the results obtained during the study.

8. Any questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Serishma Gopie or Dr S.P Zulu.

9. By signing this informed consent declaration I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

10. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, _____ have read the above information and confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this documents contents. I have asked all questions that I have wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurized in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above mentioned project.

_____   _____

Participant Signature   Date

ANNEXURE E: Researcher's declaration

RESEARCHER'S DECLARATION

I, Serishma Gopie declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to

  _____

- Requested him/her to ask questions if anything was unclear and I have answered them as best I can
- I am satisfied that she/he sufficiently understands all aspects of the research so as to make an informed decision on whether or not to participate.
- The conversation took place in English
- I did not use an interpreter

_____   _____

Researcher's signature   Date

ANNEXURE F: Interview guide for educators

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions will used in the focus group interview to probe educators in order to get clarity on specific issues regarding the challenges educators faced in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase.

1. What are some of the challenges that foundation phase educators experience in teaching reading skills to learners?

1.1 What factors do you think affect learners reading skills?

2. What approaches are used by educators to teach reading?

   2.1. As grade R educators, how do you teach reading?
   2.2. As grade 1 educators, how do you teach reading?
   2.3. As grade 2 educators, how do you teach reading?
   2.4. As grade 3 educators, how do you teach reading?
   2.5. What are some of the approaches do you use in teaching reading to learners in your class?
   2.6. What do you think is the most effective approach to teach weaker learners?
   2.7. As Foundation phase educators, what are some of the resources used to teach reading?

3. What are some of the strategies that can be used to improve learners reading skills?

   3.1. What do you think need to be done to improve learners reading levels and skills?
   3.2. How do you provide support for second language learners who are experiencing difficulty in reading?

ANNEXURE G: Certificate for Language Editing

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Date: 02 May 2017

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that the Mini-dissertation: Challenges faced by educators in the teaching of reading in the foundation phase in Clare Estate, Durban written by Serishma Gopie has been edited by me for language.

Please contact me should you require any further information.

Kind Regards

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