EXPLORING ISIZULU HOME LANGUAGE LITERACY ATTAINMENT LEVELS OF FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS AT ENTRY AND EXIT POINTS IN SCHOOLS IN THE UTHUNGULU DISTRICT

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my work to my late parents Mr. M. G Mazibuko and Mrs N.D Mazibuko who always encouraged and motivated me to achieve a Doctoral Degree. With less formal education, they spared the little they could accumulate in order to make me a better person that I am today.

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DECLARATION

I, Hellen Phindile Mazibuko-Khuzwayo, declare that this is my own work and that all the sources have been acknowledged by means of references.

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H. P MAZIBUKO-KHUZWAYO

JANUARY 2015
ABSRACT

EXPLORING ISIZULU HOME LANGUAGE LITERACY ATTAINMENT LEVELS OF FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS AT ENTRY AND EXIT POINTS AT SCHOOLS IN THE UTHUNGULU DISTRICT

South Africa’s performance in international benchmark tests is a major cause for concern for the country, raising questions about the effectiveness of the curriculum reform efforts and the literacy attainment levels of learners in the Foundation Phase. This study aims at exploring Foundation Phase learners’ attainment levels in IsiZulu Home Language due to their exposure to Grade R. In some rural areas, learners commence Grade 1 without going through the Reception Year class, even after the rollout plan of the universal access to Grade R that was in 2010. In such areas, Grade R is offered in school based and community based centres. The objectives of this study were:

- To find out the nature of the relationship between prior learning and academic performance in IsiZulu in Grade 1 (entry point) and Grade 3 (exit point) as the result of exposure to Grade R.
- To establish the extent to which learners have attained IsiZulu Home language literacy skills by the time they enter Grade 1.
- To ascertain how teachers identify learners’ actual development level in IsiZulu literacy.
- To determine espoused approaches to the teaching of literacy to learners who are at different levels of development in IsiZulu literacy.

Using literacy as a conceptual framework and Vygotsky’s Theory of Social Constructivism as the underpinning of the study, literature was explored and the data was also analysed. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to generate data for this case study. In order to explore literacy attainment levels of learners in
Grade 1, purposive sampling was used. Four rural school educators and thirty four Grade 1 learners from three categories, that is, those learners who obtained Grade R from school based centres, community based centres and those who did not have any prior learning, were sampled for this study. Instruments such as class activities, observations, interviews and document analysis were used to collect data. The study revealed that high academic achievement in Grade 1 is based on learners' exposure to grade R and that their literacy attainment levels differ as per the three categories. However, the gap in literacy development among learners from the three categories shrinks as they exit the Foundation Phase of study. The findings also reveal that educators lack proper skills of identifying learners’ zone of proximal development and also to teach in the zone of each learner. The study recommends proper training of educators in differentiation and also in establishing the baseline of learners in their mother tongue.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Year 2010 was marked as the roll-out of universal access to Reception Year class (Grade R) in South African schools. This was envisioned by the Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education (Department of Education, 2001). It was believed that the country could have achieved an expansion of services and improvements in the quality of Grade R programmes. In order to improve the quality of these programmes, this grade had to be formally registered with the provincial departments of education, have educators with relevant teaching specializations and be registered with the South African Council of Educators (SACE). This will provide the youngest citizens of South Africa with a solid foundation for lifelong learning and development in the 21st century (Department of Education, 2001). This projection was evident as by 2010 Grade R was formally part of the Foundation Phase with the inclusion of nutrition programmes, specific curriculum, and availability of teaching and learning material, career path and professional development. This grade is now at the General Education and Training (GET) band in the Foundation Phase, that is, Grade R to Grade 3 with its curriculum needs that are treated as other grades in the National Curriculum Statement and with appropriate curriculum guidelines.

Previously Grade R was under Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with no predetermined curriculum guidelines. Even though there is universal access, some Grade R learners are still at satellite centres. These centres are independent and operate in community sites. It is not known if educators in these sites are academically and professionally qualified or even registered with SACE.
The Education White Paper 5 stipulates that every learner should have attained Grade R before commencing Grade 1 (Department of Education, 2001). This policy seems not to receive the attention it deserves in some rural areas. It is common that in such areas some children do not go through Grade R, but begin schooling when their age qualifies them to be in Grade 1. This can be caused by a number of reasons like the illiteracy rate of their parents or guardians. As most of the schools in rural areas have been granted a no-fee status, none of the parents or guardians can say they have been affected by financial glitches to pay school fees in Grade R.

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) states that by the end of the Reception Year, children are expected amongst other things: to look at pictures in magazines or books and talk about common experiences; listen to others with respect without interrupting the speaker; listen and respond to simple questions, listen to and recall simple word sequences in order and participate in discussions and ask questions (Department of Basic Education, 2010). It is possible that when learners enter Grade 1, a child who has never been to a Grade R class would not be on par with the child who graduated from Grade R as the latter has already attained some competence in the Reception Year. Grade R is a reception class where learners are being received from the home environment and are being prepared for formal schooling (Grade 1). Being the reception class, Grade 1 educators have some expectations regarding the literacy attainment levels of these learners. In an ideal situation, these educators should focus on training the competences set out for a Grade 1 class and not to digress in order to accommodate those who did not have a chance of doing this grade.

The majority of learners in South African Foundation Phase schools performed badly in literacy assessment tests for the past few years at the exit point (Grade 3) when annual assessments were administered. Many efforts have been made by the country since 1994 to improve literacy levels through various literacy programmes. This can be one of the reasons that led the Department of Education through Language in Education Policy
(LiEP) of 1997 to stipulate that Foundation Phase teaching should be done through mother tongue. In this case isiZulu as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) is the main focus. Mashiya (2011) is of the idea that early mastering of literacy in a mother tongue has positive results towards future academic achievement of children as it is the language best known to the learners when they commence formal schooling. This demands that parents as primary educators, peers and their communities have to play a very crucial role in literacy development for children in their early years.

The new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which is the advancement of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), recommends the additive bilingual approach to the teaching of an additional language in the Foundation Phase. This approach intends to assist children to attain a high level of home language competence when they start formal schooling. In Grade R only Home Language (HL) is taught and First Additional Language (FAL) is introduced in Grade 1. This will assist learners to easily adapt to the additional language and should have also accomplished a high level of literacy competence by the end of the Foundation Phase (Grade 3) Department of Basic Education (DBE), (2011). Mashiya (2011) supports the idea of children being fully developed in their mother tongue in order for them to interact with others and become fully functional beings in the world around them. This depends on the literacy attainment skills that children bring to school. Van Zyl (2011) affirms that children have to be developed in cognitive skills relating to language and literacy abilities before they start schooling.

Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use dominant symbols of a culture for personal and community development (Zarcadoolas, Pleasant, & Greer, 2006). In most cases, literacy is defined as the ability to read, write and understand visual forms of communication such as body language, pictures, maps and videos etc. CAPS covers a wide range of literacy skills that should be learnt by learners in the Foundation Phase. These skills are listening, speaking, reading, writing and
handwriting. Thinking and reasoning and grammar usage are incorporated in these five literacy skills (DBE, 2011).

The South African Department of Basic Education has taken literacy as its priority in education as Bloch, Down, Piper, and Trudell (2012) perceive early mastering of literacy as the core in attaining lifelong learning for children. This will have a positive impact on the children`s future academic performance. Bharuthram (2012) asserts that the problem of children`s poor literacy skills in primary schools is usually carried over into secondary schools and inadvertently higher education institutions as many students who enter higher education struggle to cope academically. The early years in learning in particular, the Grade R class prepares learners and helps them develop the literacy skills in the relaxed environment. Grade R teaching is play-based since this class bridges a gap between home and school and hence it is called a transitional class. By the time learners enter Grade 1, which is formal in nature; they would have acquired necessary literacy skills to boost their academic performance.

The Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa`s (PRAESA) Early Literacy Unit (ELU) has been conducted in African countries including South Africa in order to modify the approach of teaching literacy, especially reading and writing for children of early grades in the multilingual schools and community backgrounds. It also emphasized the value of using stories for learning. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) of 2006 was an international study for reading literacy in lower grades which involved 40 countries including South Africa, which has displayed disappointing results for South African learners. The Summer Institute of Linguistic International (SIL) programmes focused on the improvement of neglected and smaller languages as LOLT. African languages were neglected in the apartheid era as African children were using English or Afrikaans as LOLT in their first years of schooling. The Research Institute International (RTI) developed a tool named the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) which included different activities in identifying reading problems to
individual children which had positive results after having participated in reading intervention programmes. *Save the Children* initiated in a Literacy Boost Intervention protracted the advancement of reading in young children.

Because literacy attainment in elementary grades has been the cause for concern in many countries across the globe, for example in the United States, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 produced the Early Reading First (ERF) programme. Amongst other things, this programme focuses on classroom environments in preschools and assists in ensuring that children commence formal schooling developed with skills needed for academic achievement. These skills include oral literacy, letter recognition, phonological and print conventions awareness (Pullen & Justice, 2003). The ERF provided grants to institutions serving young children aged three to five years with the intention of preparing them to start schooling with necessary language, cognitive, and literacy skills that can prevent difficulties in reading (National Evaluation of Early Reading First, 2007).

Family background is one of the factors that enhance learners’ literacy attainment levels. Ntuli and Pretorius (2005, p. 94) state that children spend most of their formative years at homes with their families improving their early literacy or equipping them with necessary skills needed for formal schooling. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) emphasize that parental involvement plays a major role in their children’s literacy development which continues into their adult years. Barbarin and Richter (2001) are of the idea that early literacy development highly depends on the level of stimulation and enrichment available to children in their early stages as literacy is core in mastering all subjects.

Snow (2004) argues that children have to demonstrate different literacy skills before any formal literacy tutoring which is the responsibility of families at home and preschool
educators. She further argues that these early emerging literacy-relevant skills include capacity to recite the alphabet, to name and print letters, to distinguish letters and signs of the environment and other simple literacy skills. Weigel and Martin (2006) assert that the basis for literacy is embedded in the early ages of children where they develop oral language skills in their daily practices which will assist them in becoming successful in their academic achievement. This will be prominent if the language of teaching and learning is in their mother tongue in early grades. Hart and Risley (1995) state that children are ‘mirror images’ of their families concerning language usage and the way they relate with others. Barone (1998) confirms that children who use a second language for LOLT commence formal schooling with little or no vocabulary in the language and their parents and siblings may be short of material and understanding in making their children ready for formal schooling, especially those from disadvantaged families.

Daniels (2001) states that Vygotskian theory emphasizes the role of parents and peers in literacy development for children through social interactions. When addressing the link between Vygotsky and other theories of social interaction to learning, he stated that “The concept of cognition as a phenomenon that extends beyond the individual, that arises in shared activity, owes a clear debt to the original Vygotskian understanding that the interpersonal precedes the intrapersonal” (p.70). He believed that interpersonal interaction comes first followed by cognition and the development of ideas that takes place within the individual person. He further argued that a child develops self regulatory aspects of language through social interaction with an adult. He believes that from the socio-cultural perspective, the learner`s nature of thinking, learning and development can be better understood by taking into account the collective and the historical nature of individual life. Vygotskian theory emphasizes the fact that literacy attainment is a social process that starts early in children`s lives where they develop literacy skills like speaking about their daily experiences with others. This affirms that families and the environments in which children live have a great impact on their literacy development.
Berk (2006) asserts that Jean Piaget believes in children’s biological maturity as a condition for learning. Piaget (1962) argues that children have to discover and learn about themselves and their environments through play. He stresses that social pretend play has a positive impact in early literacy development of children. He therefore identifies different forms of play. For the purpose of this study, the imaginative or symbolic play will be used for its relevance to early literacy learning. Bloch (2006) states that symbolic play involves pretending that an object is for something else rather than its original use and it is mostly played between the ages of two to seven. This type of play unites the child to the environment and the child's reality (Piaget, 1962).

Vygotsky (1978) stated that in play a child become “a head taller than himself.” He limited the scope of play to make-believe play or typical dramatic. He stated that play features three components, namely, creation of imaginary situation by the child, take on and act out different roles and follow the different rules for performing the specific roles. The child therefore becomes engaged in self-regulated behaviors. He argued that to sustain play, children must act deliberately and demonstrate behavior that is not part of the particular role as they are supposed to follow the rules voluntarily after stating the actions that are consistent.

Since Grade R is grounded on advancing home language literacy skills in children, it is therefore important that all learners undergo this process before they are enrolled in the Grade 1 class. When children skip this grade and enter Grade 1 they are likely to be disadvantaged because a Grade 1 class offers two languages yet using an Additive Bilingual Approach. In this class, the LOLT is mother tongue, while FAL is being introduced. Learners who missed Grade R are more likely to underachieve when compared to their counterparts who have completed a Grade R class and therefore, their attainment skills could be lower. This could pose a serious problem on the educator who has to deal with learners who are not on par in terms of literacy attainment skills. This requires an educator who is well conversant with multi-level teaching; an educator
with a skill of differentiated instruction which is an approach to planning so that one lesson is taught to the entire class while meeting the individual needs of each learner.

According to CAPS, at the end of Grade R the learner is expected to listen with enjoyment and be able to respond appropriately and critically to situations. S/he is expected to communicate confidently and effectively in spoken language in different situations. Listening and speaking are very important in the child’s learning, it is therefore crucial that these skills are fully developed earlier in the child’s academic life. Other than listening and speaking, a learner is expected to have acquired the following by the end of Grade R: sing simple songs and does action rhymes; listens to and recalls word sequence in order; naming and pointing to body parts; listens to stories and acts these out; listens and responds to simple questions; listens to and repeats rhythmic patterns and copies correctly, and talks about pictures in/on posters theme chart, books etc. Regarding reading, the learner must be able to read with enjoyment and respond critically to aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts. The learner should have achieved in shared reading, group guided reading, paired/ independent reading, and phonics (including phonemic awareness). In writing the learner must be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for different purposes. S/he should have mastered the skills in shared writing, group writing, individual writing, grammar and spelling activities (DBE, 2011).

Prior learning may have a bearing effect when the child progresses to the next grades. For example, most children underperform at the exit level of the Foundation Phase. Lack of prior learning before entering Grade 1 could be one of the reasons. This is evident in the performance of learners in Annual National Assessments (ANA), particularly in literacy, and the assessments that are conducted in Grade 3 which is the exit level of the Foundation Phase. The national results reflects that in 2011 Grade 3 learners got an overall of 35% in literacy (DBE, 2011), in 2012 it was 52%, and in 2013 they got 51% (DBE, 2013). In the 2011/12 KwaZulu-Natal report, the department voiced concerns
about the ANA results and set targets for learner attainment in literacy which was 47% in 2011 and 62% in 2014 (DBE, 2011).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Firstly, at the entry point, educators in Grade 1 receive learners who are from different circumstances. There are learners who have graduated from Grade R in community sites, some are from school based sites and others, despite the universal access, get into Grade 1 with no prior formal education. These learners may have gaps in terms of the literacy knowledge. Educators may not know the level at which they should pitch their lessons as these learners are in the same class and taught concurrently. Although CAPS prescribes what should be taught to these children, the level of their development dictates what the educator should teach. Educators should make informed decisions about the level of knowledge to be taught. Educators may be uncertain about these disparities.

When learners enter school, their literacy development levels are not on par. This is due to many reasons such as the following: some had the privilege to attend a Reception Year class while others have not been so privileged, or some were privileged to attend a Reception Year class but because in the area where there are no school based sites, they were enrolled with community based sites. Although there is no scientific study conducted, community sites are believed to be run by practitioners who are not properly qualified to scaffold learners’ literacy skills to the expected level, and this is a social construct. Because of this stigma, community sites that offer Grade R classes are underrated. To be responsive to the needs of individual learner calls for educators to be properly trained in administering baseline assessments which will then inform their teaching. Baseline assessments will enable educators to teach in the zone of all learners in Grade 1. It is not known what strategies educators use to establish the zone
of learners in order to understand their literacy attainment skills in their mother tongue isiZulu which is the LOLT.

Because of the product of learners Grade 1 educators get, it becomes difficult for them to pitch their lessons at the same level. Some learners when enter Grade 1 are at the baseline, some are under the baseline and others are above the baseline. Educators are facing the problem of identifying learners’ literacy attainment levels based on their prior learning. They need to have skills of establishing the baseline of each child so that they are able to teach at the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Bodrova and Leong (1998), Smith and Waite (2012) and Antonacci (2000) confirm that teaching at the child’s zone requires multi-level teaching skills on the side of the educator. Educators have to use different assessment strategies to diagnose learners’ current abilities or prior learning. Van Der Stuyf (2002) stated that it is the educators’ role to support learners and provide them with support structures to reach the next stage. Thus, educators have to use a scaffolding instruction strategy in their teaching. Scaffolding instruction originated from Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory and the ZPD. These scaffolds will assist the learner to construct on prior knowledge and internalize new information (Van Der Stuyf, 2000).

Secondly, at the exit point, the Annual National Assessments (ANA) displayed disappointing literacy results of Foundation Phase learners in South Africa. In all nine provinces of South Africa, most learners performed far below the expected levels in literacy (DBE, 2011). This reveals that there is a mammoth dilemma regarding literacy at lower grades. At exit level (Grade 3) ANA results prove that learners perform poorly in literacy. DBE (2011) reported that ANA results had drastically dropped since 2008. In 2011, 45% of Grade 3 learners in literacy scored below 35% as compared to 2008, 36% Grade 3 learners who scored below 35%. This shows that prior learning has a bearing effect on these learners and the problem lingers on until they graduate from Foundation Phase.
It is therefore against this background that the study purports to answer the following questions:

- What is the nature of the relationship between prior learning and learners’ academic performance in isiZulu at entry and exit points?
- To what extent have learners attained isiZulu Home language literacy skills by the time they enter Grade 1?
- How do teachers identify learners’ actual development level in IsiZulu literacy?
- Which approaches to teaching literacy are espoused in the teaching of multi-level classrooms?

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to explore Foundation Phase learners’ attainment levels in IsiZulu Home Language as the result of exposure to Grade R.

1.3.1 Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To find out the nature of the relationship between prior learning and academic performance in isiZulu in Grade 1 (entry point) and Grade 3 (exit point) as the result of exposure to Grade R.
- To establish the extent to which learners have attained isiZulu Home language literacy skills by the time they enter Grade 1.
- To ascertain how educators identify learners’ actual development level in IsiZulu literacy.
• To determine espoused approaches to the teaching of learners who are at different development levels in IsiZulu literacy.

1.3.2 Hypotheses

• There is a relationship between prior learning and learners’ high academic performance in IsiZulu in Grade 1 (entry point) and Grade 3 (exit level).
• Learners enter Grade 1 with high literacy attainment level skills.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The records of the National Research Foundation reflect that there has been no study conducted on this topic since the 2010 universal access of Grade R in South African schools. This study seeks to explore Foundation Phase learners’ attainment levels in isiZulu Home Language as the result of exposure to the Reception Year class, that is, prior learning. This study is significant for the following reasons:

• It intends to explore and surface the isiZulu literacy attainment levels of Foundation Phase learners when they enter Grade 1. This is aimed at assisting educators to know and understand who their target group is and enhance them to think ahead of the effective ways of dealing with these learners.

• This will also reveal the standard of knowledge Foundation Phase learners have regarding the administration of baseline assessments to enable the educators to be responsive to the needs of learners.
• The knowledge gap of learners as caused by lack of prior learning will be exposed if any exist and ways of reducing it so that by the time learners exit Foundation Phase the gap has already shrunk.

• It is hoped that the identification of literacy levels will assist policy makers and educators in the development and the implementation of emergent literacy teaching strategies for learners in schools.

• Gauging the literacy levels of learners at entry and exit points seeks to assist in establishing whether Grade R is making any difference in improving literacy competences for Grade 1 learners. That might call for the policy that will make Grade R a compulsory class since at the present moment some children do not go to Grade R since the grade is currently not compulsory despite the fact that the access to this grade was made universal in 2010.

• The study also seeks to assist Grade 1 educators to be acquainted with the kind of learners they are receiving in the beginning of formal schooling and to know which level to pitch their teaching activities. Educators may be aware of the effective strategies of developing the child’s baseline so that they are placed in the levels they deserve to be based on their attainment levels.

• The study seeks to inform subject advisors who work hand in hand with Foundation Phase educators regarding the areas in which these educators need to be developed.

• The efficiency of each setting will be explored since the study explains that Grade R learners come from diverse background. Some are from community sites, others are from school based sites and others are straight from home with no
prior learning experience. This will in turn inform the stakeholders of the settings that need urgent attention and the action to be taken to alleviate problems caused by having learners who have wide gaps in terms of literacy skills.

With all the above, the study has been deemed significant with the hope that it will shed some light on the areas which are covered by scientific studies. This in turn will finally improve the quality of teaching and learning and hence improve ANA results.

1.5 FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on Foundation Phase learners’ IsiZulu Home Language attainment levels. The study subjects are Grade 1 as well as Grade 3 learners and their educators. Educators of Grade 1 learners who receive these learners when they are fresh from schools are also the focus of the study. The study focuses on the Foundation Phase specifically on the threshold of Grade 1 which is the entry point as well as the end of Grade 3 which is the exit point of the Foundation Phase. What has been studied from learners will be confirmed by their educators, therefore educators and learners are difficult to study in isolation. These learners are chosen because they are fresh from the Grade R class and they have covered the desired performance as set out in CAPS. Some of them have not been in a Grade R class and others have been in community sites centres. The study focuses on learners who are IsiZulu speakers and are in IsiZulu medium schools. Thus two rural schools in the Uthungulu District situated in Nkandla and Mthonjaneni Circuits in KwaZulu-Natal who are using IsiZulu Home Language as their LOLT were selected. The focus of the study is on all literacy skills acquired in Grade R which are listening, speaking, reading, writing and handwriting.

The study focuses on rural schools as it has been evident that low percentages in standardized tests normally come from most rural schools. It is mostly in rural schools
where there are Grade R classes in community sites and where you can get learners who start Grade 1 without any formal schooling. Thus, the three categories that are the focus of the study are found in rural areas. Uthungulu district was chosen because it is one of the districts in Kwazulu-Natal that is rural. These two schools are the focus as they share the same characteristics, that is, rurality, socio-economic status and culture.

1.6. DEFINITION AND ELUCIDATION OF CONCEPTS

1.6.1 Prior Learning

The term `prior learning` is used to define learning that took place in previous or earlier experiences where certain skills have been acquired. Such skills are recognized in order to distinguish and admit the nature of education and lifelong learning (Department of Training and Workforce Development, 2013). In this study, prior learning will be directed to the learning (knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences) children possess before they commence Grade 1. It can be the competencies that children have gained in their informal learning or through life experiences like from their families, peers or community or through formal learning, for example the learning gained in a Grade R class.

1.6.2 Foundation Phase

In South African schools, it is a phase that is in the General Education and Training (GET) band that constitutes of Grade R to Grade 3. Languages (Home Language and First Additional Language), Numeracy and Life Skills are taught in these grades with different time allocations as stipulated in the CAPS document.
1.6.3 Grade R

The South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) (2010) defines Grade R as the last year of children’s early development before they commence their formal schooling in Grade 1. In South African schools, Grade R is the first grade in the GET band at the Foundation Phase which has the same curriculum components or guidelines like any other grade. It is sometimes referred to as the Reception Year.

1.6.4 School readiness

School readiness is defined by De Witt and Booysen (2007) as the level of preparedness of a child to begin formal schooling. This demands that the child has to be fully developed physically, emotionally, socially, cognitively and normatively. Age as a standalone aspect cannot determine the level of school readiness. Literacy development of children is one of the aspects that is regarded as important for school readiness.

1.6.5 Entry point (level)

For this study, entry point will refer to Grade 1 which is the second grade in the GET band of the Foundation Phase in primary schools. Learners of this grade are expected to be six years of age as per admission policy of South African schools. The researcher has decided to call this grade an entry point as it is the grade where the learners from the three categories (those who attended Grade R in school based centres, others from community based centres and those who are fresh from homes) meet for the first time in
a formal learning process sharing the same class and concurrently taught by the same educator.

1.6.6 Exit point (level)

The exit point will mean Grade 3 which is the last grade of the Foundation Phase in the GET band in primary schools. Learners from this grade will progress to Grade 4 provided they have met the progression requirements for it. They are exiting the Foundation Phase and commencing the Intermediate Phase which is Grades 4-6 and this marks the change in pedagogy as mother tongue becomes the subject and first additional language becomes the LOLT.

1.6.7 Literacy

Literacy is a complex and active process with cognitive, linguistic, psychological and social aspects (Teale & Sulzby, 1989). Zygouris-Coe (2001) refers to literacy as the ability of people to effectively communicate for real life applications and it involves all the aspects of communication in real-world situations. Cooper (1997) views literacy as the ability to read, write, listen, speak, view and think. For the purpose of this study, literacy will refer to the definition as cited by Cooper (1997).

1.6.8 EMERGENT LITERACY

Bustos (2007) defines emergent literacy as the children`s early reading and writing behaviors that smudge the beginning of their development into conventional reading and
writing processes. Zygouris-Coe (2001) characterizes emergent literacy as a developing range of print and nonconventional literacy behaviors that start before any schooling and lead into conventional reading and writing, listening, viewing, speaking and thinking. She further argued that emergent literacy is the term used to conceptualize early reading and writing development. It is used to portray pre-literate children `s skills linked to reading and writing before their achievement of conventional literacy (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 2001). This means that that children gain knowledge about language, reading and writing before they start formal school.

1.7 PLAN OF THE STUDY

Chapter One

Chapter One provides a motivation of the entire research study, the statement of the problem, aims of the study, hypothesis, significance of the study, definition of operational terms and the plan of the whole study.

Chapter Two

This chapter presents a critical overview of literature about studies conducted on the attainment of home language literacy skills by Foundation Phase learners, how educators identify and support them, as well as the teaching strategies that are effective in teaching learners from diverse literacy backgrounds. The theoretical underpinnings of the study will also be provided in this chapter.
Chapter Three

Chapter Three presents the research design and methodology of study. This will include the collection of data, the selection of subjects, a plan for organizing and analysis of data.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four deals with quantitative findings of the study provide an interpretation of data and then give a detailed analysis of the data that will be collected. The statistical analysis of data will be unpacked by interpreting the findings in terms of the critical research questions asked.

Chapter Five

Chapter Five presents qualitative findings of the study, provide an interpretation of data and then give a detailed analysis of the data that will be collected. The statistical analysis of data will be unpacked by interpreting the findings in terms of the critical research questions asked.

Chapter Six

Chapter 6 concludes by suggesting recommendations of the study based on the stated research questions. The limitations, recommendations, suggestions for future study and conclusion will be discussed in this chapter.
1.9 SUMMARY

This chapter presented a motivation for the study by highlighting the background, the statement of the problem and raising the research questions. The following chapter will present literature review as well as the theoretical framework.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present the underpinnings of the study (Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks), the review of related literature, as well as the summary. Studies reviewed are related to the questions of this research study and they appear later in Chapters 4 and 5 juxtaposed with the new findings of the current study. Finally, the summary on this chapter is presented.

2.2 UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STUDY

This study has two underpinnings: literacy as the concept and Vygotsky’s theory of Social Constructivism. The above theories are analytical in nature and they have been used to inform the development of research questions, reviewing literature and also in analyzing data for this study in early literacy learning of children in homes, social environment and social interactions. The two frameworks have been deemed relevant for the study because of their emphasis on individual and social community construction of learning and development.

2.2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Literacy is defined by Nelson (2012) as listening, speaking, viewing, reading and writing. This is supported by Garton and Pratt (1998) who view literacy as entailing the mastery
of spoken language, reading and writing. It is also defined as the ability of understanding and using those written language forms required by the society or valued by the individual (Mullis, Kennedy, Martin and Sainsbury, 2006). There is consensus in the way the different authors define the concept of literacy as they are all base their arguments on the different literacy skills.

Bloch et al. (2012) and Odora-Hoppers (2009) identify literacy as the core skill contributing towards academic achievement, lifelong learning and sustainable development. Research has shown that literacy remains a problem in young children internationally and even in South Africa. In Africa, the literacy research agenda used to include adult literacy and the intermingling amongst language and language acquisition and the use of colonial languages as Language of Teaching and Learning (LOLT) which has recently included early years of schooling for children (Bloch et al., 2012). In this continent there are modern studies in literacy for early grades which were conducted by NGOs in past years. These studies included the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA), The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Summer Institute of Linguistic International (SIL), Save the Children, and Research Triangle Institute International (RTI).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2006) states that literacy as a concept is both complex and dynamic as it is defined and interpreted in numerous ways. It states that individuals` conception about what is meant to be literate or illiterate are highly influenced by `academic research, institutional agendas, national context, cultural values and personal experiences.` It further argues that understandings in the international policy community have expanded “from viewing literacy as a simple process of acquiring basic cognitive skills, to using these skills in ways that contribute to socio-economic development, to developing the capacity for social awareness and critical reflection as a basis for personal and social change." p. 147. It presents four distinct understandings of literacy, namely, literacy as a set of
tangible skills, literacy as applied, practiced and situated; literacy as an active and broad-based learning process and literacy as text. The tangible skills involves the reading, writing and oral skills. For the purpose of this study, the researcher focused on the skills based definition.

The concept of literacy as it is defined underpins this study because it will focus on what the concept says, that is why the five literacy skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and handwriting). In this study thinking, reasoning and grammar usage will be the focus as these two skills (listening and speaking only because the study cuts across all literacy skills) are also incorporated in the CAPS document which states that “Listening and speaking skills are crucial to all learning, it is therefore important that they are developed early in the child’s academic life” (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.13). There is time allocation for the development of these skills in the Foundation Phase in the beginning of each day. The argument for this study will be based on literacy and also the content learnt in Grade R.

2.2.1.1 Listening

Sampson, Rasinski, and Sampson (2003, p.97) define listening as “a transactive process that involves many facets, including receiving, focusing, attending, discriminating, assigning meaning, monitoring and remembering." Joubert, Bester, and Meyer (2008) are of the idea that listening is the most used language domain for knowledge acquisition and information gathering as an individual has to be able to listen to and understand what s/he has heard. They identified different kinds of listening: simple listening; discriminative listening; interpretive; listening for information; listening to organize ideas; listening for the main points; listening to identify different critical view points and creative listening. It is therefore crucial that adults and educators have to promote these different kinds of listening in children through different activities.
According to CAPS, learners should have attained the following competencies at the entry point:

- Listens to stories and acts these out.
- Listens and responds to simple questions.
- Listens to and repeats rhythmic patterns and copies correctly.
- Listens to and recalls simple word sequences in order.
- Recognizes sounds and graphemes.
- Recognizes simple numbers from one to ten.
- Copes with simple class rhymes.

These competencies are expected to have been achieved by the end of Grade R and Grade 1 educators have to base their baseline assessment on the above competencies at the beginning of the year. What is expected from a Grade 1 learner does not cater for the child’s prior learning. Grade 1 educators have to carefully plan their lessons to accommodate all the learners in class as there can be those without prior learning.

At the exit point of the Foundation Phase, learners should have achieved a number of listening competencies including the following (DBE 2011, p.28):

- Listens for the main idea and for detail in stories and answers open-ended questions.
- Listens to a story and works out cause and effect.
- Expresses feelings about a text and gives reasons.
- Listens to a complex sequence of instructions and responds appropriately.

Children not only develop the listening and speaking skills in the components of language, but also in all the different subjects. DBE (2011) states that these skills must be developed early in the child’s academic life as they are important to all learning. Evangelou, Sylva, Glenny, and Kyriacou (2009) affirm that during the period of learning, children establish and test hypotheses about language rules through the linguistic
feedback they receive. They further state that children can easily process the sounds they listened to long before they understand words or grammar.

Pascal and Bertram (2009) argue that children in their ECD classes must enjoy listening to and discussing storybooks, match spoken words with written words, participate in rhyming games, and enjoy retelling of simple narrative stories and nonfiction text. Educators must encourage literacy related play activities and slot children in language. Pascal and Bertram (2009) further maintain that family members should be encouraged to engage children in conversations like providing the names for things, describe ideas and events that are important, have conversations with their children during mealtimes and during the day, and play games with them that involve specific directions.

2.2.1.2 Speaking

Speaking can be referred to as oral skill which consists of producing systematic verbal utterances used to convey messages. McKeown and Beck (2005) state that children have to learn to use explanation and elaboration in their responses and also to relate their ideas in a dialogue. This will lead to a conversation with the person they are talking to. Evangelou et al. (2009) point to conversation as the most effective way for learners to practice and refine their language skills, including vocabulary. They emphasized that the ongoing verbal give-and-take offers great opportunities for speaking and listening and the child gets immediate feedback.

Evangelou et al. (2009) stress children’s knowledge of their own language both in vocabulary and grammar is primarily developed through a range of conversations with adults and peers around them. This is when children learn a set of rules to generate utterances that are appropriate in their social situation. They argue that children who
come from less stimulating homes definitely will benefit from instruction in letter-sound relationships and in support for vocabulary.

According to CAPS Grade 1, children should have achieved a number of competencies in the beginning of the year which includes the following:

- Names and points to parts of the body.
- Sings simple songs and does action rhymes.
- Talks about pictures in/on posters, theme charts, books etc.
- Matches and sorts things according to shape, colour, etc.
- Listens to a story showing enjoyment.
- Listens to a story with comprehension.
- Participates in discussions and asking questions.
- Names and points to parts of the body.
- Listens to and recalls simple word sequences in order.
- Ability to listen without interrupting the speaker.
- Participates in discussions and asks questions.

Hart and Risley (2003) emphasize the role of family interactions with their children having a positive effect on language development. In a study conducted by Hart and Risley (1991), they discovered that during conversations children become motivated in responding and practicing relevant responses to a situation and provide a response with an utterance that demanded the continuation of the conversation. They found that those children that engage themselves in conversations found it easy to express themselves and succeeded in making themselves understood, communicate their needs and wants, interpret what others said and respond accordingly, and take turns during the conversation with their counterparts. See figure 2.1
Naude, Pretorius, and Viljoen (2003) assert that preschool learners experience a series of receptive and expressive language which include learners` poetry, storytelling and creative dramatics. Educators have to put emphasis on those activities as these tend to improve the listening skills.

CAPS has stipulated that learners should have attained, amongst others, the following competencies at the exit point (Grade 3) (DBE, 2011, p.28):

- Engages in conversation as a social skill, accepting and respecting the way others speak.
- Makes an oral presentation (e.g. tells personal news, describes something experienced, recounts an event).
- Tells a short story with a simple plot and different characters.
- Uses language imaginatively (e.g. tells jokes and riddles).
- Interviews people for a particular purpose.
Uses terms such as subject, verb, object, question, statement, command, synonym, antonym, exclamation mark.

### 2.2.1.3 Reading

Inglis, Thomson, and Macdonald (2000) define reading as one of the most powerful ways of receiving ideas, information and stories. Zygouris-Coe (2001) maintains that reading is the cornerstone of education and the foundation of lifelong learning. Researchers have different approaches when it comes to the best methods of reading. Joubert et al. (2008) identified the following methods of reading: the alphabet method; phonic method; look-and-say method; eclectic method; language experience method; whole language approach, and the balanced approach.

CAPS for the Foundation Phase divides the requirements for reading into: Shared Reading (including Shared Writing), Group Guided Reading, Paired / Independent Reading, Phonics (including Phonemic Awareness). It states that children should have attained the following competencies when they commence Grade 1 (DBE, 2011, p 32):

**Emergent Reading Skills**

- Recognises and points out common objects in pictures.
- Arranges a set of pictures in such a way that they form a story.
- Interprets pictures, e.g. makes up own story and reads the pictures.
- Acts out parts of a story, song or rhyme.
- Holds the book the right way up and turns pages correctly.
- Pretends to read and adopts a reading voice.
- Recognizes own name and names of some other children in the class.
- Begins to read high frequency words seen in the classroom and at school, e.g. door, cupboard.
**Shared Reading as a class with teacher**

- Reads enlarged texts such as poems, big books or poster.
- Makes links to own experience when reading with the teacher.
- Describes characters in stories and gives opinions.
- Predicts what will happen in a story through the pictures.
- Answers questions based on the story read.
- Draws pictures capturing main idea of the stories.

**Independent Reading**

- Reading picture books.

Adams’s (1998) findings indicate that the ability to recognize and name letters is the best predictor of Grade 1 reading achievement, while children’s ability to discriminate phonemes’ auditory ranking is rated as the second best. Research also indicates that children who can distinguish most letters with confidence will find it easy to learn about letter sounds and word spelling than a child who has to think and try to remember. It also indicates that it is very crucial to know letter names as they contain a sound that is represented by the letter.

Weaver (2002) stated that learners learn most ideas about print by observing their educators turning pages of books in class or the movement of the hand or pointer across and down the page. She also argues that the learner can incidentally learn the words and letters when the educator is pointing to these letters and words while talking about them.

Mcgill- Franzen (1993) stated that Durkin (1966) conducted a study looking at the home environments of children who learn to read before entering their ECD classes. Her findings were that children receive on average 1,000 to 1,500 hours of preschool literacy
experiences. These home experiences included amongst other things the teaching of alphabet letters and sounds, making rhymes with words, engaging in literacy activities, reading and writing related activities, and engaging in literacy activities like reading signs and food labels. Therefore ECD educators need to provide intentional literacy experiences similar to what the children in Durkin`s research were familiarized with at home. When ECD educators offer the intentional literacy activities, most learners will demonstrate the seven signs of emergent literacy by Cunningham and Allington (1994) which are: pretend to read; can write and read what he has written even if it is meaningless and no one else can write it; tract print like writing from left to right; can name many letters; recognizes if words rhyme and can make up rhymes, recognizes some concrete words such as her or his name, can name many letters and can say words that begin with common initial sounds, and knows critical jargon, for example pointing to one letter or first letter in a word.

Pascal and Bertram (2009) mention that family members should be encouraged to: read stories to their children at early stages, regularly visit the library; read narrative stories and nonfiction texts daily to their children; allow children to be involved in activities that involve reading and writing like cooking or making grocery lists, and encourage their children`s attempts at reading and writing. Pascal and Bertram (2009) further stated that children must comprehend that any print carries a message; be engaged in reading attempts; recognize labels and signs in their environment; identify some letters, and make some letter-sound matches. Their educators at the other end must share books with children and mould reading behaviors, reread for them favorite stories and encourage children to talk about reading experiences. Gough and Walsh (1991) affirm that those children that have mastered the ability to look at printed letters and combination of letters and able to pronounce their corresponding phonemes in ECD classes are more likely to become skilled readers.
Wilson (2007) stated that children`s reading success throughout elementary schooling can be envisaged from their emergent literacy skills. He further mentioned that for children to understand the phonological structure of a language, they must know how print is organized. Children must therefore learn the conventions of print like being aware that text on a page moves from left to right, top to bottom, which part of the book is the front and knowledge of the alphabet. Segers and Verhoeven (2004) affirm that many researchers discovered that exposure to phonological instruction before school make children to read faster.

Lonigan (2006), Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) assert that learning to read is an ongoing developmental process that surfaces early in a child`s life. Research has shown that children`s letter knowledge in ECD class is the best predictor of Grade 1 reading achievements (Adams, 1996). Riley (1996) and Honing (1996) are of the idea that the most powerful predictor of reading is the child`s early development of the alphabet and a child who can identify letters easily and without being hesitant will have an easier time meeting the social literacy requirement.

Snow and Biancarosa (2006) state that the first steps towards literacy include children recognizing some books by their covers, listening when read to, ability to understand picture books, distinguishing pictures from print, correctly holding a book upright and turning pages, ability to recognize some letters, and producing purposeful-looking scribbles.

Strictland (1989) findings noted that children who are from families where storybooks are read have a great advantage than those who are not read to at home. During story reading, parents talk about words and pictures in the books and try to make meaning out of the pictures. Such parents sometimes use literature as a way of transmitting family
values. It is therefore crucial for families to build up and preserve ongoing parent-child communication from birth.

2.2.1.4 Writing

Parush, Lifshitz, Yochman, and Weintraub (2010) affirm that writing enables individuals to express their knowledge and thoughts on paper. These thoughts can be seen by someone who had contact with them. Hayes (1996) describes writing as a communicative act requiring a social context and medium, a generative activity requiring motivation, and an intellectual activity which demands cognitive processes and memory. Writing is a process which develops gradually in children. Hayes (1996) modified the Hayes-Flower model of writing (1980) with the aim of portraying the different relationships in the processes capturing the difficulty in writing. Berninger and Swanson (1994) adapted the Hayes-Flower model in order to clarify the writing process and spot the challenges that are likely to affect the learners during their development. In this model there are three major influences on the writing process: affect, motivation and social context. The following figure represents Hayes-Flower model.

Figure 2.2 Berninger and Swanson’s (1994) adaptation of the Hayes-Flower model (1980)
Clark (2010) states that learning to recognize the letters in their name and to write their name enables young children to have a personal connection to writing. This is supported by the findings of Molfese, Beswick, Molnar, and Jacobi-Vessels (2006) in pre-school learners in the name writing skills study. They determined that name writing and letter naming were significantly correlated. They also found out that learners’ scores on name writing were higher than scores on writing dictated letters or copying letters. In their study, children found it easy to identify the letters of their name. This is supported by the findings of this study as a greater percentage of learners who attended Grade R in community and school based sites were able to write their names and correctly copying letters of their names. The greatest challenge in this regard was with the learners who were fresh from home and had no prior learning.

DBE (2011, p.34) in CAPS mentions that learners should have attained a number of writing competences when commencing Grade 1 which include the following:

- Draws or paints pictures to convey a message.
- Copies known letters in own name to represent writing.
- Writes from left to right and top to bottom.
- Contributes ideas for a class news book by means of drawings.
- Makes an attempt to write letters using squiggles, scribbles etc, and talks to own writing.
- Makes own books and contributes to class book collection.

Teale and Sulzby (1996) state that literacy development occurs through real life activities experienced on a daily basis that demonstrates to children that writing has a communicative purpose. They further argue that those children who are given chances to experiment with writing at early stages grow in their understanding of how print works. Such children are said to have acquired an increase in vocabulary, an understanding of the story’s structure, and can recognize the difference between written and oral language.
Pascal and Bertram (2009) stated that family members should be encouraged to provide enough time to draw and print using different writing material and encourage children to recount experiences. They further argued that children at ECD classes must be engaged in any writing attempts, use known letters or approximations of letters to represent written language, writing from left to right. Regarding their educators, they mentioned that they must persuade learners to experiment with writing, encourage them to talk about their writing experiences, and provide daily opportunities to write.

Regarding writing, DBE (2011, p.34) stipulates that learners are expected to have attained the following competencies at the exit point which is Grade 3:

- Contributes ideas, words and sentences for a class story (shared writing). Uses pre-writing strategies to gather information and plan writing.
- Writes a selection of short texts for different purposes, e.g. writes recounts, dialogues.
- Writes about personal experiences in different forms, e.g. writes a short newspaper article.
- Drafts, writes, edits and publishes own story of at least two paragraphs (at least 12 sentences) for others to read.
- Writes and illustrates six to eight sentences on a topic to contribute to a book for the class library.
- Uses informational structures when writing, e.g. experiments, recipes.
- Keeps a diary for one week.
- Writes a simple book review.
- Sequences information and puts it under headings.
- Summarizes and records information, e.g. using mind maps.
- Uses punctuation correctly, e.g. capital letters, full stops, commas, question marks, exclamation marks, inverted commas, apostrophes in contractions.
- Uses conjunctions to form compound sentences.
- Uses phonics knowledge and spelling rules to write more difficult words.
2.2.1.5 Handwriting

Edwards (2003) determines that handwriting has to do with the use of a hand to form a letter on a page or writing material. Medwell, and Wray (2007) discovered that intervention programs for handwriting had a positive impact in developing children to be good writers. A number of studies have been conducted regarding the other literacy skills, especially reading, but handwriting received a low profile in previous research such that fewer studies have been conducted regarding the development of handwriting skills, yet it is a critical skill. It is therefore crucial for educators to know how to assist learners who struggle with letter formation and legible handwriting. Graham, Berninger, Abbott, Abbott, and Whitaker (1997) maintain that legible handwriting in early learning has a great benefit in future academic achievement of learners. Legibility of letters is defined by Berninger, Nielsen, Abbott, Wijsman, and Raskind (2008) as the quality or readability of the letter.

Clark (2010) asserts that effective handwriting skills must start in the early years of learning with its instruction focusing on forming upper and lower case letters, understanding sound letter associations, and the ability of combining letters into words. She argued that “People master the ability to compose and to handwrite by mastering early skills in fine motor (e.g., hold and manipulate pencil with smooth coordination); visual motor (copying shapes, letters, or symbols); and understanding phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, and phonemic awareness (concepts of letter sounds and names)” (Clark 2010, p.56). Graham et al. (1997) state handwriting is the single best predictor of length and quality of written composition in the primary years.
DBE (2011:33) maintains that learners are expected to have attained the following skills by the time they enter Grade 1:

- Develops small muscle skills through finger play, e.g. play dough, screwing nuts onto bolts.
- Develops fine motor control using scissors to cut out bold outlined pictures, shapes etc.
- Develops eye-hand coordination by playing e.g. catching and throwing, drawing and painting.
- Traces simple outlines of pictures, patterns and letters in own name where the correct starting point and direction arrows are included on all letters.
- Forms letters using finger painting, paint brushes, wax crayons etc. starting at the right point and following the correct direction.
- Copies patterns, words and letters (using the correct starting point and direction when forming letters).
- Uses a range of writing tools, e.g. paintbrushes, wax crayons.

Olsen (2003) discovered that a greater percentage (third quarter) of kindergarten learners were failing to form all of the letters of the alphabet legibly and automatically. For these learners, the upper case letters were easier to master than lower case, which shows that these letters are easier to master and must be taught first.

Educators must also mind the type of paper they are giving their learners to write to. This is supported by Asher (2006) when he suggested that educators must minimize the variations of writing paper used throughout the day for beginning or struggling writers. In his study Clark (2010) used writing paper with only a bottom line, but the kindergarten learners experienced challenges in placing the letters on the baseline. Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, and Weiss (2006) is of the idea that an increase in family involvement has a great implication on the children’s literacy than did family income, maternal level or child’s ethnicity.
It is stated that in CAPS learners should have attained the following competencies at the exit of the Foundation Phase:

*Transition to a joined script or cursive writing*

- Uses handwriting tools effectively, e.g. pencil, eraser and ruler.
- Writes a sentence legibly and correctly in both the print script and the joined script or cursive writing.
- Forms all lower and upper-case letters in joined script or cursive writing.
- Writes short words in the joined script or cursive writing.
- Transcribes words and sentences correctly in the joined script or cursive writing.
- Makes transition to the joined script or cursive writing in all written recording (i.e. the date, own name; and own written texts).
- Copies written text from the board, textbooks, work cards etc. correctly.
- Writes neatly and legibly with confidence and speed in a joined script or cursive writing.
- Experiments with using a pen for writing.

Literacy as the conceptual framework and its variables of listening, speaking, reading, writing and handwriting has been used in this study to address and focus the research questions.

**2.2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is influenced by the constructivists’ theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. According to constructivists’ theories, the environment and experiences are interpreted by people in the light of the knowledge and experience they have. They build their own understandings and knowledge rather than simply taking in an external reality and develop an unchanged, exact mental copy of objects and events (Cook, 2005).
Jean Piaget was born in 1896 in Switzerland and died in 1980. From an early age it was apparent that he possessed a talent. He displayed his interest in nature, specifically by examining wildlife in its natural scenery, which contributed to his numerous scientific publications. At the age of 21 he obtained a PhD and was passionate about psychology. He recognized that children are active thinkers and that children of the same age group tend to give same incorrect answers while those of different age groups give different incorrect answers (Wertsch, 1985).

He therefore spent most of his time observing children and their cognitive development. He was of the idea that children’s interaction with the environment around them is very crucial for their cognitive development and that children learn about themselves and the environment around them through play. In symbolic play children tend to use an object to stand for another rather than its original use (Piaget, 1962). Children can, for example, use a banana and pretend to talk on the phone. He stresses that social pretend play has a positive influence in literacy development of children as play unites the child to his/her environment and also his/ her reality.

He also believed that fantasy play and make-believe play contribute positively to the development of literacy in young children. Cook (2005) stated that in fantasy play children use symbols and pretended to be something such as a superstar or to be involved in activities that are impossible. He further mentioned that in make-believe play children make use of their own toys as tools for performing a certain procedure, like talking to their dolls as their living kids. Through these types of play children are talking and their literacy skills are developed at an early age even before they start their formal schooling.

Lev Vygostsky is another constructivist relative to this study. He was born in 1896 to a middle class family from a small town in Tsarist Russia and died in 1934. Wertsch
(1985) stated that he got his education through the assistance of a private tutor whose pedagogical technique was based on a Socratic dialogue. He became known as a little professor in his youth and displayed his interests and knowledge of history, theatre, literature, languages and philosophy. He was fluent in languages like English, German and French and could read Hebrew, Greek and Latin (Wertsch, 1985).

Vygostky’s theory was constructed on Piaget’s thought of a child as an active learner. He developed a socio cultural theory which is of the idea that social experiences have an impact in shaping the way children think and interact with the world around them. His emphasis was on the impact social interaction and instruction had in a child’s learning and development. He felt that the social context is very crucial in mental processes development and knowledge acquisition. He argued that children learn through their social interactions with adults and peers. Through these social interactions, literacy is developed in a child. Vygotsky portrays language as both a psychological and cultural tool. He mentions that there is a relationship between the ‘intermental’ activity and the ‘intramental’ capabilities as children’s involvement in activities generate new understandings and ways of thinking.

Vygotsky believed that most of the learning in a child happens in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) refers to the Zone of Proximal Development as the difference between what children can do with assistance and what they can do without assistance. The ZPD is a level of development achieved when the child is being engaged on social learning. It is therefore the distance between what a person can do with or without any assistance (Vygotsky, 1978). This means that an individual can do something independently and with guidance in another, thus displaying stages of development as other tasks can be performed by getting help from someone like adults and peers. The Zone of Proximal Development displays the readiness to learn and perform to a higher degree. Children can perform a certain task today with assistance, but tomorrow they can independently perform a more demanding task of the same
nature with more problem-solving where they will be exercising self control. He believe that learning occurs in a social practice where learners first learn through and with others before they internalize the learning as their own.

Daniels (2001) stated that the ZPD is quoted as Vygotsky`́s most reflective contribution to educational theory and debates. He maintains that the parents or older siblings` role is to support the child`́s effort with scaffolding, thus giving her / him the support the child needs and once the child has mastered the skill, the adult must therefore withdraw the scaffold or assistance. He further argued that through social interaction with an adult, a child develops self regulatory aspects of language. He supported Vygotsky`́s ideas on his socio cultural perspective when he mentioned that the nature of thinking, learning and development can be better understood by taking into account the collective and historical nature of human life.

Berk and Winsler (1995, p. 26) portray Vygotsky`́s ZPD as a “dynamic zone of sensitivity in which learning and cognitive development occur. Tasks that children cannot do individually but they can do with the help from others invoke mental functioning that are currently in the process of developing, rather than those that have already matured.” This demands that the educator must be able to identify the ways of assisting the learner in his/her learning and also discover what the learner can do with assistance.

The following figure represents the ZPD in a social context that has been adapted from Lui (2012).
Gallimore and Tharp (1990) believed that teaching occurs when assistance is presented at the points in the ZPD where performance demanded assistance. They developed a model that provided a guideline for sharpening instruction at the child’s development. Their model constituted of four stages located within the ZPD and each stage requires different degrees of assistance. In stage 1 the educator, parent or any expert models the task and gives directions to the learner on how to execute the task. In stage 2 the child is self regulated and self directed as s/he uses prior knowledge to execute the task. The ZPD happens between stage 1 and stage 2. The child is not a perfectionist, thus at this stage as s/he might need some assistance. The need for assistance vanishes in stage 3 as Gallimore and Tharp (1990) pointed out that at this stage the learner’s performance is developed, automatized and fossilized. The knowledge in the child is fixed such that performance is happening without thinking and cannot be forgotten. This is the stage where the child has emerged from the Zone of Proximal Development. Their last stage of the ZPD describes the learner as s/he learns many concepts and strategies, thus it describes the recursive nature of learning. By this stage the learner is at the de-
automatisation of performance leading to the repetition of the task using the previous experience through the ZPD. See figure 2.4 below:

![Figure 2.4 Model of four stages in the zone of proximal development (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990, p. 185)](image)

Christie and Roskos (2009) affirm that Vygotsky believes that children learn a lot through play. He believes in play as a vehicle for children and that they have to behave in a more matured manner than before as they can learn to live or play under self-imposed regulations, and play therefore creates a ZPD where they have to exercise self-control. Children’s literacy attainment increases as they will be speaking with their peers during play and performing different roles without any training given to them. Christie and Roskos (2009) stated that Vygotsky also provides solid theoretical framework for investigating play-literacy relationship. Vygotsky argues that play is the source of development and creates the ZPD. He further mentions that the new developmental accomplishment emerging within the child’s zone happens under guidance of an adult.
or capable peers. He believed that play supports the development of self regulation. Through the self regulated behaviors and performance of different roles, literacy is developed as children talk to each other while imitating their role models. This is where they practice planning and self monitoring. Thus, during play children sustain a particular role by engaging in pretend actions, talks or interactions that fit their specific character. Therefore, Vygotsky (1978) believes that an imaginary situation is created in play and children have to follow social rules. He also stated that make-believe play is essential for the attainment of social and cognitive competence.

Christie and Roskos (2009) were of the idea that play in the early years of the child provides an eloquent context for learning important skills and concepts of early literacy. They viewed play as a developmentally appropriate activity which fused impeccably with emergent learning. In play there is literacy which involves a number of processes like categorizing, problem solving and imaging. Children like playing, while literacy learning supports play. Copple and Bredekamp (2009) mentioned that children benefit from engaging themselves in self-initiated play and from the educator-planned and structured activities. They argue that play supports abilities that underlie academic learning and therefore promote school success. Imaginative and creative play support literacy skill development like phonological awareness and oral literacy. They also argued that play develops creativity, oral language, social skills and self-regulation, abilities to solve problems, knowledge and skills.

Williamson and Silvern (1991) discovered that there is a great benefit of thematic fantasy play (story re-enactment) on comprehension based on reading. In their research they found that those children that are actively involved in meta-play talks during play have comprehended the story more than those who were passively involved. This become evident that play enhances literacy development of children. Schickendanz (1994) argued that children must not be denied the path they seek to learning through
play, but they have to be provided with instruction through adult assistance and guidance.

A study conducted by Pellegrini and Van Ryzin (2007) discovered that children`s level of pretend knowledge envisaged their emergent writing status. They established important relationships between three-year old children symbolic play and their use of meta-linguistic verbs (verbs dealing with oral and written language activity), which suggests transfer of abstract, socially defined language uses between play and literacy.

Both Piaget and Vygotsky`s theories inform this study in that each learner commences schooling, specifically Grade 1, having attained some literacy skills which s/he has gained through social interactions. S/he should have attained such experiences from community members, family members or any expert who would have given assistance to the child in order to enhance her/his literacy development. Children also interact with peers at schools or homes through play which has a positive impact in their literacy development. After having given guidance by anyone the learner can be able to even perform and gain more experiences on his/her own.

2.3. EMPIRICAL STUDIES

2.3.1 The relationship between prior learning and learners` academic performance.

Academic performance refers to the progression of learners in their schooling. De Witt and Booysen (2007) stated that this demands the child to be physically, socially, mentally, normatively and emotionally developed. These skills are regarded as critical in
McClelland, Morrison, and Ponitz (2007) stated that children who commence formal schooling without academic and self-regulatory skills experience glitches like rejection by peers, low academic performance and anti-social behaviors.

Research indicates that Grade R exposure gives a powerful and long-lasting experience as its literacy learning has a positive effect on academic performance in higher grades. This is supported by the findings on a correlational follow-up study by Campbell, Helms, Sparling and Ramey (1998) on the long-term effects of early childhood and preschool interventions for low-income families. The study involved 111 learners from 109 families. After analyzing their longitudinal data, they agreed that at the age of 15 years the most powerful predictor of academic performance was the previous academic performance and prior learning. Boethel (2004, p.25) in the National Center for Family and Community argued that “Children who do better in kindergarten tend to maintain that advantage as they move into the first grade and beyond.”

Pianta (2003) used educator observations and grade reports in his study to assess learners’ academic performance. He discovered that the pattern that each learner set in elementary school was highly predictive to the child’s future academic performance. Studies conducted by Walton (1995) and Bryant, MacLean, Bradley, and Crossland (1990) have shown that learners’ early exposure to rhymes at preschool level play a very important role in the development of phonological awareness.

Prior learning with regards to reading indicates that learners’ competences are developed by the time they start Grade 1. This is supported by the findings of a longitudinal research study conducted by Hanson and Farrell (1995) tracking close to 40000 students from Early Childhood Development (ECD) classes who learned reading indicates that two thirds of these students were found superior in reading skills and all
other indicators measured in high school. From their findings, there was no evidence of negative outcomes from learning to read in ECD classes.

The study conducted by Pascal and Bertram (2009) indicates that children who are likely to have challenges with literacy learning are those who commence school with less prior knowledge and skills in areas like oral language, writing, background knowledge, alphabet letter knowledge, phonological and print awareness. It is therefore crucial for Grade R educators to know the literacy skills and knowledge that should be possessed by their learners at the end of their Reception Year. Snow et al. (1998) spotted the significance of making sure that children enter Grade 1 with the attitude toward and knowledge about literacy that will enable them to succeed.

Copple and Bredekamp (2009) emphasized that ECD educators must set developmentally appropriate goals and expectations aimed at their understanding of literacy learning. Justice and Kaderavek (2004) state that emergent literacy skills that are normally acquired in preschool years present a solid background for children`s subsequent transitions to early or beginning reading towards the achievement of conventional skilled reading. This is also supported by Zygouris-Coe (2001) who stated that ECD educators’ role is so crucial in promoting literacy through the acquisition of rich language and emergent literacy skills.

Prior learning determines the readiness of the child to school. School readiness is defined by De Witt and Booysen (2007) as the level of preparedness of a child to begin formal schooling. This demands that the child has to be fully developed physically, emotionally, socially, cognitively and normatively. Age as a standalone aspect cannot determine the level of school readiness in its own. Literacy development of children is one of the aspects that are regarded as important for school readiness. This demands that children be holistically developed in their body and mind to start formal schooling.
Boethel (2004) stated that factors that are mostly associated with learners` cognitive and socio-emotional preparedness are socio economic status, characteristics of family background, home and community environment, and prior knowledge from preschool programs.

Scarborough (1998) purports that those children that are not ready for school and had limited experiences with language and text and limited verbal interactions and reading with parents and caregivers are at risk of developing reading problems when they enter school. Van Zyl (2011) stated that if the learners` school readiness is fully developed when they enter Grade 1, it will bear positive results in their academic performance when they commence formal schooling. On the other hand, the National Education Goals Panel (1998) asserts spiraling achievement does not entail school readiness only, but also getting schools ready for the learners they are serving.

2.3.2 When learners enter school (at entry point)

Literacy development starts in the children` s early years while they are still with their mothers at homes and continues as they grow. The socio-cultural background of a child is very important in his/her literacy development. This supports the conclusions of Speaker, Taylor, and Kamen (2004) when they stated that children attain literacy skills through their interaction with others in any social context. This is in line with the constructivists` perspective, especially Vygotsky theory that indicates the impact of socio-cultural context in literacy development of children.

Normally, rural schools are in poor communities. Most learners are from families of low socioeconomic status and perform badly in schools. Isaacs, Sawhill, and Haskins (2008) argue that these lower levels of academic achievement and education attainment
contribute to lower levels of economic success in adulthood and lower social mobility in our society. They further argued that they perform poorly in standardized tests and are less likely to finish their matric or graduate at tertiary institutions.

Cambourne (1988) developed a model of learning literacy. In his model, he emphasized that children must get encouragement, support and response from adults for the successful acquisition of literacy. This will result to gradual progress and future academic achievement. He believed that the adults’ expectations must foster engagement with their learners in order for them to learn reading and writing. Below is a figure representing a model of learning literacy by Cambourne (1988).

![Cambourne's model of learning](image)

**Figure 2.5 Cambourne's model of learning, as applied to literacy learning (adapted from Cambourne 1988)**
Weiss, Dearing, Kreider, and McCartney (2005) conducted a longitudinal study on 390 learners from low-income families. They followed the children from kindergarten to the fifth grade. In their study they concentrated on how family involvement affects children from low-income homes and mothers with different levels of education. Their findings were that family involvement has an added value for low-income children who were at risk of school failure due to their parents` low level of formal education. They discovered that high levels of family involvement were more strongly associated with average literacy performance in children whose mothers had less than a high school education as compared to those children whose mothers had higher levels of education.

A correlational research study was conducted by Burchinal, Peinsner-Fernburg, Pianta, and Howes (2002) which involved a nonrandom sample of 828 children, but they mainly focused on 511 learners who had two years of data available. They agreed that family characteristics like maternal education and parents` caregiving practices and attitudes were the best predictors of children`s outcomes. This is supported a National Institute of Child Health and Human Development study of early child care (NICHD) Early Child Research Network (2002) when it stated that children with varied experiences of child care are highly influenced by the quality of parenting they receive. The National Center for Family and Community Connections stated that some children`s early academic skills are influenced by household stressors and family risk factors. This is also supported by Zill and West (2001) when they mentioned that learners with mothers who have less than a high school education, living in a family that receive food stamps or rely on cash welfare payment, and living in a single-parent household are more likely to be negatively affected in their academic performance.

International Reading Association (IRA) and National Associational for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (1998) indicated that it might seem as if some children acquire these understandings magically or on their own. Research proposed that they are the benefits of considerable thought where there is playful and informal learning, adult
guidance and instruction. Schickendanz (1994) asserts that even though children play and discover things on their own, it is evident that they need adult assistance and guidance. Sulzby and Teale (1991) believe that literacy is embedded in the culture of the family and community, while the homes play an important role in emergent literacy. Homes support their children in different ways and levels in literacy development. Researchers like Snow et al. (1998) suggested that young children whose homes provide less chance for acquiring knowledge and skills regarding books and reading are at high risk for reading difficulties than those whose homes afford to establish a rich literacy environment.

Stanovich and Siegel’s (1994) findings with regard to reading were that children at risk for later reading problems had weaker emergent skills than those with developed emergent skills. Wilson (2002) stated that it is therefore crucial that educators are able to accurately measure emergent literacy skills by observing the child on daily basis and identify those children who need assistance and instruction. Sulzby (1989) suggests that emergent literacy is the reading and writing behaviors that precede and develop into conventional literacy whereby these behaviors are developed through meaningful and functional experiences that require the use of literacy in settings that are part of the child’s daily life.

Zygouris-Coe (2001) mentions that literacy development does not start when the child enters the school, it starts very early in life and is an ongoing process. Throughout the emergent literacy years, children have combined their developmental skills in their effort to construct meaning with language (Strictland and Morrow, 1989). They argue that focus on children’s strategies both develops and depends on skill, but a focus on skills in isolation offers little or no support at all for strategic learning. Hall (1987) argues that emergent literacy is a plodding process happening over a certain period in the development of literacy within the child which materializes in the child’s natural learning ability. This is supported by Sulzyby and Teale (1991) and Whitehurst and Lonigan
(1998) who maintain that emergent literacy is phrased as the skills, attitudes and knowledge that children possess about reading and writing before formal learning takes place. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) state that emergent literacy consists of knowledge, attitude and skills that are developmental pioneers of reading and writing. They are of the idea that emergent literacy consists of two spheres which are the inside-out skills (e.g. letter knowledge and phonological awareness) and the outside-in skills (e.g. conceptual knowledge and language).

The impact of family members in developing speaking and listening skills was also discovered by Pascal and Bertram (2009) who stressed that family members should be encouraged to engage with children in conversations like providing the names for things, describe ideas and events that are important, have conversations with their children during mealtimes and during the day, and play games with them that involve specific directions. The International Reading Association (IRA) mentioned that family literacy happens during daily activities in the world around us as parents, family members and children use literacy in their communities and homes. Vygotskian theory accentuated that the attainment of literacy is a social process that begins in the early years of children where their families and the environment in which children live play a greater part in the literacy development of their children.

Hart and Risley (1995) studied on the role that is played by verbal interactions at homes evolving around all the literacy skills. They discovered that poor and uneducated families offer less language experiences than middle-class families. The poor and uneducated families therefore decreased the amount of verbal interactions functions and children from such families are at risk of developing less literacy skills. Families must spend time in having nice conversations with their children and read them interesting stories, provide writing materials and any way that will foster positive attitude toward and atmosphere during literacy activities. This is supported by the findings of Dickinson and Tabor (1991) which state that adult-child verbal interactions at homes during meals and
other conversational interactions have a positive impact in the development of learners decontextualized language skills.

Morrow (1993) proposed that educators can learn a lot of things from parents who have the ability to create a language-rich literate environment at homes and must stop focusing on family shortfalls and look at the positive things that families do in promoting early literacy. Strictland (1989) affirms that educators have to concentrate on developing and improving what children already have from their families.

The findings from the longitudinal study conducted by Weiss et al. (2005) discovered that family involvement increases children’s positive feelings about literacy which will in turn improve their literacy performance. They maintain that family involvement is not only important in a certain period of development, but throughout the whole developmental continuum. The type of involvement can vary from family to family and from child to child.

The Even Start, Early Head Start and Head Start were some of the intervention programmes in the United States funded by its government and sponsored by school, libraries and businesses which gave out positive results in literacy development. Such programs served families and children of all ages. Even Start was a programme that aimed at supporting family centred education in order to assist parents to learn literacy and parenting skills that will help their children reach their full potential at school. This programme assisted families with children from newborn to age 7. Head Start offered amongst other things, educational services for children aged 3-5 in low-income families and for children with disabilities. Similar programmes were provided in Early Head Start where services were rendered to low-income pregnant women and families with toddlers and infants, (International Reading Association (IRA)).
2.3.3 When learners exit Foundation Phase (elementary level which is the exit point)

Biemiller and Boote (2006) mention that by fourth grade, the children whose vocabulary is below the grade level, even if they may possess adequate word identification skills, are likely to slouch in reading comprehension and are unable to profit from independent reading of most grade level texts. Research indicates that learners from poor backgrounds normally build their vocabulary slower than the ones from high socio-economic status, which leads to an increasing disadvantage to the learner over a period of time (Anderson and Nagy, 1992).

Prior learning with regard to reading was also studied by Hanson and Farrell (1995) in their longitudinal research tracking close to 40000 students from Early Childhood Development (ECD) classes who learned reading indicates that two thirds of these students were found superior in reading skills and all other indicators measured in high school. From their findings, there was no evidence of negative outcomes from learning to read in ECD classes.

This was further evident in the research findings by Allington and Broikou (1988) which showed that emergent literacy results at the end of pre-school are projective of reading and writing achievements by the end of Grade 1. They mentioned that there is a likelihood that children struggling with reading and sometimes writing at the end of Grade 1 remain poor readers and sometimes writers by the end of Grade 4. Bharuthram (2012) asserts that the problem of students’ poor reading skills in primary schools is usually carried over into secondary schools and inadvertently higher education institutions as many students who enter higher education struggle to cope academically.
2.3.4 The level of literacy attainment learners enter school with

Early reading experiences decrease the learning challenges in higher and lower grades. Campbell, Ramey, Pungullo, Sparling, and Miller- Johnson (2002) are of the idea that children who read books and other activities flourish more as compared to their counterparts with less exposure to books who thus experience learning challenges in schools. This is supported by the findings of Mason (1992) who discovered that shared reading and learners` at their homes is highly linked with the ability of learners to label environmental print.

In his work, Moats (1999) estimated the difference at school entry to be about 15,000 words, with linguistically disadvantaged learners knowing about 5,000 words compared to the more advantaged learners knowing 20,000 words. Dickinson and Tabors (1991) as quoted in Campbell et al. (2002) identified dimensions of oral language experience linked to later literacy success as exposure to different vocabulary, opportunities to participate in conversations that use extended disclosure, and home and school environments which are cognitively and linguistically friendly. Speaking and listening are the basic skills for literacy as Scaborough (2001) maintains that those children who possess powerful speaking and listening skills often have strong reading and writing skills.

Regarding listening, Hart and Risley (2003) estimated that learners from professional families heard more words per hour, which results in larger cumulative vocabularies in professional families, as they heard an average of 2,153 words per hour, as compared to learners from working class families who heard an average of 1,251 words per hour and learners from welfare-recipient families heard an average of 616 words per hour. In a year children from professional families heard an average of 11 million words, while those children in working class families heard an average of 6 million words and learners
in welfare families heard an average of 3 million words. This means that, by age four, a child from a welfare-recipient family could have heard 32 million words less than a classmate from a professional family. By age three, the observed cumulative vocabulary for children in the professional families was about 1,100 words. The observed cumulative vocabulary for children from working class families was about 750 words and for children from welfare-recipient families it was just above 500 words. This indicates learners from advantaged families heard a higher ratio of literacy attainment skills like speaking and listening than those from disadvantaged families. Evangelou et al. (2009) stated that many studies on Home Learning Environment indicate that early learning activities of children in their homes predict learners` academic performance later in primary school.

Barnett and Hustedt (2003) stated that research shows that Grade R exposure gives a powerful and long-lasting experience as its literacy learning has a positive effect on classroom performance in higher grades. This is supported by Snow et al. (1998) who also spotted the significance of making sure that children enter Grade 1 with the attitude toward and knowledge about literacy that will enable them to succeed. It is therefore crucial that ECD educators `role is so crucial in promoting literacy through the acquisition of rich language and emergent literacy skills (Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

Copple and Bredekamp (2009) are of the idea that ECD educators must set developmentally appropriate goals and expectations aimed at their understanding of literacy learning. Justice and Kaderavek (2004) state that emergent literacy skills that are normally acquired in preschool years present a solid background for children`s subsequent transitions to early or beginning reading towards the achievement of conventional skilled reading. Thus, parents and educators are encouraged to build a reading culture in schools and homes.
Pascal and Bertram (2009) indicate that children who are likely to have challenges with literacy learning are those who commence school with less prior knowledge and skills in areas like oral language, writing, background knowledge, alphabet letter knowledge, phonological and print awareness. It is therefore crucial for Grade R educators to know the literacy skills and understandings that should be possessed by their learners at the end of their Reception Year. Heath (1986) as cited by Campbell, Breitmayer, and Ramey (1986) states that the existence of mentors who are joyful literate people is the single most important condition for literacy learning. Snow et al. (1998) spotted the significance of making sure that children enter Grade 1 with the attitude toward and knowledge about literacy that will enable them to succeed.

2.3.5 Educators` identification of learners` Zone of Proximal Development

Individual assessments are more appropriate in identifying each learner`s level of actual development. Lui (2012) established that educators must be able to identify and make use of the strengths and weaknesses of each learner in his/her learning experiences both as an individual or in a group. This will assist the educator in spotting the level of knowledge and understanding s/he want her/his learners to attain. Heritage (2008) as cited by Lui (2012) affirms that educators must thereafter develop a model of the learning progression that is expected from learners in attaining the required knowledge and understanding. S/he must generate different tasks and activities that give him/her allowance to collect information about learners` understanding of the theme during learning.

In assessing listening and speaking when learners enter Grade 1, the educator must first introduce himself/herself to the learners. S/he must then give them a chance to introduce themselves. S/he must tell stories that are relevant to their experiences which will demand feedback and conversation. During this assessment period, the educator
must also observe and listen to the behavior and responses to learners. S/he must possess a skill of understanding the learners’ thought processes that they used in arriving at their responses. This can be done through frequent assessments which can be formal or informal and which will permit the strengths and weaknesses to materialize both at the individual and group level. The study conducted by Darling-Hammond, Linda, Cheung, and Martin (2003) found that one way to assess learners’ learning is through the structuring of classroom discussions with purposeful questions. The educator must listen carefully to the learners to guide the instructional conversation toward deeper understanding. S/he can provide assistance; clarifications and follow-up activities with more challenging questions which will in turn further extend the learners’ thinking. Such questions can be scaffolds and guide learners through a logical thinking process.

Regarding reading in baseline assessments, learners must be given books. The way in which they hold the books and turn pages must be taken into consideration. The educator must give learners picture books to read and make meaning out of them. They must also be assessed on whether they are able to read their own handwriting or not. During the writing process the educator must do the baseline assessment in handwriting like looking at the development of the fine motor skills. Thus, the holding of the pencil must be assessed. The educator must give different writing apparatuses to use like the wax crayons, paint brushes, pair of scissors, etc. (DBE, 2011). S/he must be able to adjust the teaching instructions and activities to what the learners have already grasped and what they are still in need of help with. This demands that the educator must be able to give feedback that uses learners’ strengths to build on their weaknesses. This can be done to an individual learner or groups by enforcing their thinking through guiding questions, modeling or demonstrations.

In doing baseline assessment regarding writing, educators must let learners write their names on a piece of paper. They must also be given a chance to copy known letters in their own names. During this activity the educator will be observing a number of things
like writing from left to right and the correct sitting position when writing. Smith (2012), in his article on his understanding of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development from the socio-cultural theory and the ways in which educators can pair the understandings to become better educators, believed that there are many pre-assessment strategies that the educators can use in diagnosing the learner`s current ability. This can be through surveys, learners` charts, reading reports, conversing with their previous educators, questioning learners and closely monitoring their early interactions.

Bodrova and Leong (1998) identified two strategies of providing assistance within a learner`s ZPD. The first strategy is materialization which was defined by Galperin (1969) cited by Bodrova and Leong (1998) as the use of tangible objects and physical actions to demonstrate a concept as the mental action being learned. They believed that if materialization is correctly applied, it will enable the learner to function at the highest levels of their zones. It facilitates the development of new mental actions that permit learners to perform at the highest level without assistance and also assist the learner to focus on the critical aspect of the concept to be internalized. Their second strategy is the private speech. They defined private speech as self-directed, regulatory speech which involves audible directions made by oneself on how to proceed. Their study has demonstrated that the use of materialization and private speech has created a lot of gains if used by young children who demand external support for most of their mental actions.

2.3.6 Approaches to teaching literacy in the teaching of multi-level classrooms

In the United States, an article from the National Institute of Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) (1982) defined a multi level classroom as traditionally a single class where there are learners of different levels of language acquisition. Learners` abilities sometimes vary in the literacy skills. One can be an above-level listener, at-
level speaker, below-level reader or at-level writer. Educators need to possess skills of identifying learners` strengths and weaknesses during teaching and learning as teaching in a multilevel class is very challenging.

Roberts (2007) in the California Adult Literacy Professional Development (CALPRO) article on managing the multilevel classes mentioned that the use of grouping approaches was discovered as a valuable management tool in any multi level setting. It mentioned that the teacher must first administer a needs assessment in order to determine the levels of the groups and then categorize them accordingly. The educator has to plan for all the groups to work on the same theme, but with different lesson objectives. This is also supported by ERIC in an article on teaching multi level classes when it mentioned that educators can start their lessons with the whole group and then progressively categorize them into smaller groups when the task given demands some individual attention. It emphasized that grouping students according to their abilities will bear positive results as learners` strengths and weaknesses are easily recognized and each one of them feel that there is something possible s/he can do.

Roberts (2007) mentions that educators can group learners in four ways: pair work (two learners working together), group work (three to ten learners working together), teamwork, and whole-class work. Learners of the same literacy proficiency levels can be grouped together or group them according to their proficiency levels. The latter has a benefit in that learners who are above the level can assist those who are below the level. Normally, learners who are below the level find it difficult to cope and win in teamwork and whole-class work.

Roberts (2007) stated that an educator in a multi level class must start the lesson with the whole class as this will provide a foundation for the leveled tasks that will follow. In the presentation of the lesson, the educator must intentionally lower and raise the
instruction in order to gain the interest of the below-level, at level and above level learners. It is crucial to start with the vocabulary that will be used which lends to whole-class multi-level instruction. She continues stating that the educator must assign leveled tasks using a variety of groupings attached to their proficiency and literacy skills during the practice and evaluation stages of the lesson. At the end of the lesson the whole class must be brought together to be reviewed and assigned the whole-class activity.

2.4. SUMMARY

This chapter presented the introduction, the theories underpinning the study and the empirical studies. The following chapter will deal with the quantitative approach, qualitative approach, delimitation of the study, population and sampling, and ethical consideration.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the underpinnings of the study and the literature review. This chapter gives a detailed description of the methodology used in the study. It outlines the research methods used in the study and this includes the research design, sampling methods and a detailed description of the data-collection methods, instruments, strategies of data analysis and all the procedures that were deemed necessary for the success of the study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study involved mixed methods, that is, the quantitative and qualitative methods. Creswell (2012) defines mixed methods as a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study in order to understand a particular research problem. Mixed methods were chosen in order to combine their strengths and minimize their weaknesses in the study (Creswell, 2012). A combination of these methods assisted the researcher in producing a comprehensive understanding that was required for inform decision making. They were also considered because of their assistance in addressing a more defined range of research questions (Connelly, 2009). Thus, the use of both methods increased the validity and the reliability of the research data as the researcher was able to work on the strengths of the data collection methods and minimize the weaknesses of any single approach used. Thus, it balanced the data collection and the analysis of data that provides context of the study. They also
provided a better understanding of the research problem. Kayrooz and Trevitt (2005) affirm that the combination of these methods strengthen the study and serve as a continuum of research. According to Maxwell (2012), the challenge of using mixed methods is that the researcher must be careful enough that they do not duplicate but complement each other.

Cassidy (2012) used mixed methods in her doctoral study Searching for equality: improving reading literacy at second level in disadvantaged schools. She studied the impact of the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) Literacy Strategy on reading literacy programmes amongst a group of first year JCSP students with a focus on the JCSP Literacy Medley. The JCSP was a programme that supported educators and students in assessing and succeeding in the mainstream curriculum. The sample constituted of 1 010 students and over 150 educators in 35 schools and their librarians. The use of the mixed methods assisted her in reaching valid and reliable conclusions regarding her study. She used different data gathering instruments which include observations, reading survey of all JCSP first year students, standardized tests, interviews, questionnaires, focus group and on-line evaluation. She stated that she chose to use mixed methods in order to “ensure that the methodology was responsive to the complexity of the issue in hand” (p.117) She affirms that the literacy strategy is multi-layered and established that the mixed method approach is the best route of gaining the insights necessary to address her research question. She believed her study was “more suited to a synergy between two broad methodological options that would be complementary, perhaps guiding teachers to improve instructional practice while also offering the system some suggestions for future direction,” (p.121). There was coherence in analyzing all the gathered data from the different instruments. Her conclusions came out with steps leading to success in the development of a reading culture which involved implementing a range of reading interventions.

A mixed approach was also used by Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Walpole (1999) in their study, aimed at determining classroom and school practices relating to reading achievement in primary classes. The study constituted of 14 schools in the United
States, 104 educators and 04 students from each school. Principals were part of the study but played a low profile as they only provided information like test scores and demographics or forming part of the interviews. Learners from these schools come from average and low socio-economic backgrounds. A number of data collection instruments like observations, case study, tests, surveys, daily logs and interviews were used. Findings arising from the mixed methods used discovered that not all the educators teaching in schools that are regarded as ‘most effective’ are effective educators.

Another relevant study that used mixed methods is the one conducted by Ellis (2012). It focuses on the perceptions and knowledge of speech-language pathologists in emergent literacy instructional practices. The sample consists of five female speech-language pathologists working in an educational setting who provided intervention programs to learners with communication disorders. In gathering data, she used a mixture of instruments including interviews, photography assignments, surveys and questionnaires. During data analysis the researcher collectively analyzed the data from the different research instruments in order to recognize the relationship of the findings. The findings of the qualitative and quantitative measures were then compared and they displayed a number of similarities. For instance, both approaches indicated lack of extensive pedagogical knowledge and also identified same strengths and weaknesses in emergent literacy service provision.

The cited studies displays the benefit of using mixed methods as they determine if there is convergence, differences, or some combination of findings (Ellis, 2002). Collins, Onwuegbuzie, and Sutton (2006) supported the use of mixed methods research in different fields. They feel that the significance of mixed methods in research is treatment integrity, significance enhancement, instrument reliability and also enrichment of the participant.

This chapter has two sections. The first section entails quantitative data and the second section entails qualitative data. Both these methods gave an in-depth of knowledge as
well as quantitative measures of performance of the Foundation Phase learners in isiZulu Home Language attainment levels when they enter Grade 1 and exit Grade 3. The researcher chose to start with the quantitative method as according to Zawawi (2007), starting with this method when using a mixed approach assists in gathering relevant facts in order to gain understanding of the matter to be studied. Thereafter qualitative method will follow which will provide an in-depth understanding of the generalized facts.

### 3.3 QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

This section of the study involved a quantitative method located within a positivist paradigm. Quantitative method involves explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data or analyzing the data using mathematically based methods, specifically statistics (Aliaga and Gunderson, 2000). It aims at measuring and finding out the extent of a particular phenomenon using validated data collection instruments. Marsh (1982) states that quantitative method provides information and explanations that are adequate at the level of meaning. In this study, this method was chosen in order to measure the various views and activities of the sample. This method assisted in improving the validity of the research instruments and provided a numerical dimension when addressing the phenomena (Sun, 2009). Thus, it assisted in giving statistical information (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2000), on the performance of learners in literacy and also assisted in establishing if there was correlation between the learners’ literacy level and their exposure to a Grade R class. Tewksbury (2009) contends that a quantitative method is a more scientific approach to social science as its focus is on using specific definitions and operationalizing the meaning of the concepts and variables. In general terms, it involves gathering numerical data that can be subjected to statistical analysis in a research.

Cobb (2000) used a quantitative approach in her study when investigating the effects of an early intervention tutorial program on at risk children’s reading achievement. 60
learners from two elementary schools and 30 pre-service educators that were enrolled in the researcher`s early literacy course were participants. These elementary schools had diverse student population. Each pre-service educator was expected to tutor one child for 45 minutes, twice weekly for ten weeks. For her findings, the means and the standard deviations were calculated on the students` performance on the pretest and posttest measures. Data analysis displayed that there was no statistically significant differences in the reading achievement gains scores between the experimental group, receiving tutoring, and control group receiving only regular classroom instruction for Grade 2. Same thing applied to Grade 3 as no statistically significant differences were found between the comparison groups in reading achievement gains scores. All her findings were based on statistical information.

In this study, the strengths of the quantitative method as specified by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992); Balsley (1970); Kealey and Protheroe (1996); Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), and Matveev (2007) were taken into consideration and include:

- The research problem must be clearly stated and very specific.
- The data is considered quantifiable and usually generalizable to a larger population.
- The independent and dependent variables under investigation are clearly specified.
- The original set of research goals are persuaded, more objective conclusions to be reached and hypothesis tested.
- Provided a broad analysis of the phenomena.
- Addition of status and credibility in research.
- Eliminating subjectivity of the judgment.
- Achieving high levels of reliability of gathered data due to controlled observations, laboratory experiments, mass surveys, or other form of data collection.
- Conducts the research in an unbiased, objective manner.
Considering the above strengths of the approach, the researcher felt that it was appropriate to regard it in this study. However, this approach has its weaknesses as stated by authors like Zawawi (2007); Griffin (2004); Cohen et al. (2007); Kealey and Protheroe (1996), and Matveev (2007) which includes:

- Failure to provide the researcher with information on the context of the situation where the studied phenomenon occurs.
- Time consuming especially for a large sample to collect and analyse data.
- Inability to control the environment where the respondents provide the answers to the questions in the survey.
- Results need to be calculated and analyzed using a specific software such as SPSS which is not accessible to anyone.
- It is artificial and inflexible.
- Limited outcomes - only those outlined in the original research proposal due to closed type questions and the structured format.
- Not encouraging the evolving and continuous investigation of a research phenomenon.

The quantitative approach selected for this study falls within the positivist approach. Positivist approach is based on the premise or belief that the world exists and as such the relationships between things can be measured. Fraser and Robinson (2004) state that a positivist paradigm is based in beliefs about a certain problem or aspect that exists and have a set of agreements about how that particular problem can be tested. These agreements and practices lead researchers to observe and record the experiences, thereafter find out the consequences that caused those experiences to occur. The study seeks to measure the relationship between prior learning of Grade 1 learners, which is their Grade R experience, and their academic performance in isiZulu in Grade 1 when they enter formal schooling and Grade 3 when they exit the Foundation Phase.
Two research questions were subjected to a quantitative approach. The first question used inferential statistics in order to establish the nature of the relationship between learners` prior knowledge and their academic performance. The first question seeks to find out if there is a relationship between learners` attendance of Grade R and their performance in isiZulu in Grade 1 when they first enter school. As a result the experimental approach was used in the study. Luzzi (2003) mentions that experimental research provides the opportunity to identify the cause-effect relationships and the researcher must manipulate such conditions so as to determine the sample`s effect on behavior.

Scott (1997) is of the idea that experimental methods must be used when the researcher wishes to determine the casual relationship between phenomena. Casual relationship means that something causes another thing to happen, for example giving guidance to the learner enable him/her to work independently with added effort and gain new experiences through that exposure. Inferential statistics was used with an attempt to answer question one of the research question which focuses on the relationship between two variables. In this study the two variables are exposure to Grade R and academic performance. The predictions or inferences are reached from observing and analyzing its sample. The results of the analysis will thereafter be generalized to the larger population of the sample. The sample will be a representative of the group to which it is generalized. The researcher has tried to keep the activities and the methods transparent to ensure the integrity of the results. The results were used to validate the current findings and make generalizations about other populations of the same setting.

Although the second objective of the study is presented quantitatively, there are aspects which are qualitative in nature where learners` work and performance was interpreted qualitatively and hence this section consists of mixed methods. The quantitative part focused on looking at the scores. This enabled the researcher to see how good the performance of learners is in relation to their sites of prior learning, such as Grade R
obtained from school based sites, Grade R obtained from community based sites, as well as learners with no Grade R experience at all. This was going to enable the researcher to compare the three sets of learners in their performance in activities so as to establish if prior learning had a significant effect on the learners’ academic performance in isiZulu. The second objective is as follows:

- To establish the extent to which learners have attained isiZulu Home language literacy skills by the time they enter Grade 1.

Since in a Grade 1 class there are learners who attended their Grade R in community-based centres and others in school based centres while others did not attempt any Grade R, all the three categories of learners will be measured in their literacy attainment as they are in the same class and taught by the one educator.

3.3.1 Instruments used to generate quantitative data

Two instruments were used to generate quantitative data and these were tests and document analysis. Tests were administered to Grade 1 learners to measure their isiZulu Home Language attainment levels when they enter Grade 1. The findings from these activities displayed the levels of literacy in Foundation Phase learners when they entered formal schooling. This seeks to assist educators with the knowledge of where the learners are when they enter Grade 1 based on their linguistic backgrounds so that teachers are able to design lessons that are at the level of competency of learners. ANA Documents will help to reveal how much learners have achieved when they exit the Foundation Phase. This will help in establishing if prior knowledge acquired in Grade R has a relationship with learners’ achievement and also to ascertain if the gap shrinks as learners progress to the upper grades.
3.3.1.1 Tests or Activities

Normally in Grade 1 classes the term ‘tests’ is not used; alternatively the term that is more popular is ‘activities’. In this study the term `activities` will be used to refer to the activities that were administered to Grade 1 learners in the form of baseline assessments. These are standardized activities which were conducted to all learners sampled from two schools in the Uthungulu District. Different activities inside and outside the classroom that measured the level of literacy attainment were given to Grade 1 learners. Literacy activities that were given to the learners and observed by the researcher involved, amongst others the following: the ability to talk with classmates in class or during playing times; to identify simple shapes and colors; make meaning from pictures; recognize sounds (phonics) and graphemes (alphabets or letters); recognize numbers simple numbers from one to ten; cope with simple class rhymes, and attentive listening to a story displaying enjoyment and comprehension for it.

Activities were chosen as relevant to the study as they provide a way of examining subjects knowledge and power for applying the knowledge to new situations. Activities make it easy to measure skills, behaviors and knowledge that is required by the research study. They provide objective information that each learner knows and what s/he can do. It is also easy to score activities in any way. The disadvantages of using activities as a data collecting instrument is that it is time consuming, can be oversimplified and superficial, and can be intercepted by dishonesty through cheating (Cohen et al. 2007). The researcher overcame the latter disadvantage by being physically present when activities took place and tried to manage any dishonesty that was possible to arise. All the learners were given standardized activities because the researcher wanted to affirm their results thereafter make generalizations of the larger population of the same setting.
The activities were administered at the beginning of the year in the first term immediately after school re-opened. This period was chosen to gather data as learners are still fresh from homes and Grade R in community based or school based centres with little or no knowledge developed by the Grade 1 educator. The learners were very reserved for the first week, but as times passed they were relaxed and free in responses.

Activities or tests as a data collection tool was used by Hill (2009), an associate professor in early childhood education at the University of South Australia, in her work on oral language and beginning reading. She wanted to explore the connections between young children’s oral language and children’s reading of written language in beginning reading books. The study was conducted in a primary school in metropolitan Adelaide and constituted of 23 children who come from diverse cultural backgrounds, including a small cohort of Aboriginal learners and many immigrants from Iraq, Sudan, Serbia, Afghanistan and other African countries. A greater percentage of the school learners came from low income families. She wanted to discover ways in which five year old learners use oral language; vocabulary and phonology connect to learners’ beginning language and also determine ways in which different oral instruments provide information about early literacy development. She used different tests including Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test -4 which was a standardized test with United States norming sample. She also used a Phonological Awareness Screening tool which covers phonological awareness skills including amongst other things: rhyming words, segmenting sentences into words, blending syllables, letter recognition, blending sounds and identifying the first word. With this tool, a pre-test was administered at the beginning of the year and a post test was conducted after the learners had been in a programme for 15 weeks. Her study revealed disconnections between learners’ respective oral language vocabulary and early reading. Through this tool, she discovered that learners with English as a Second Language scored low on oral language vocabulary, but got high scores on reading leveled texts. She also discovered that the small group of Aboriginal learners got low scores in both oral and written measures.
Tabbada-Rungduin, Abulon, Fetalvero, and Suatengco (2014) also used activities as a data collection tool in their study that explored parental involvement and educators’ activities in early literacy development. This study has a sample of 114 day care learners ranging from 4-6 years old, their parents ranging from 22-42 years old and their educators from the three day care centres ranging from 32-48 years old. In their study they set out to discover the activities undertaken by parents at homes in teaching their children how to read and the activities constructed by educators at schools in promoting literacy development. There were activities that were geared towards the involvement of parents which included home and routine activities. There were also those educators’ activities that were geared towards early literacy, for instance learners performing role playing that enables them to write; learners perform text analysis when big books are read to them; involvement of learners in dramatic play to express what they have read; giving learners to talk about topics that interest them, etc. These activities were correlated with learners’ performance in letter-recognition tasks. Results from these findings revealed that parents understood of their roles in literacy development at home and are implemented activities that boosted their children’s interests in reading. They also discovered that educators provided learners with activities that catered to their reading needs.

3.3.1.2 Document analysis

Secondary data for ANA indicating the performance of Grade 3 learners in ANA was analyzed. The researcher requested the documents containing recorded marks of the 2013 ANA in literacy. These marks were captured in computerized mark sheets that were generated by the Kwazulu-Natal Provincial Examinations. The researcher chose to use the same schools where she sampled the Grade 1 learners. This information will be an aid in affirming level of literacy competences of these learners from the three categories at the exit point. It will also assist in verifying whether prior learning has an impact when learners exit the Foundation Phase. The use of this research instrument is
supported by Coombes (2007, p. 88) who argued that such documents have to be checked up on in order to support or challenge and authenticate or disapprove the findings from the other research instruments used.

The advantages of using documents are that they are inexpensive and available locally. They supply information on historical trends and also provide time for studying the trends over time. Besides its advantages, analyzing documents has its own disadvantages like: it is time consuming; it can be incomplete and can be inaccurate or be queried of its authenticity (Jensen, 2000). Despite the disadvantages documents have, they are used in this study because they display literacy results of all the learners who started Grade 1 with/without formal learning. The 2013 Grade 3 class was chosen because they are the first product who graduated after the universal access in 2010. Some learners would have gone through this grade while others did not, which could be result of being retained in the lower grade or change of school.

Document analysis was used by Coombes (2007) in collecting data for her study that was based on factors that may improve children`s early language development. She believed that at times, documentations divulge possible avenues for future research. She analyzed lesson plans done by educators for language input. Learners` work was also checked for language structures, grammatical understanding and use of vocabulary. Notes from these documents were recorded and processed. The use of this data gathering tool assisted her to reach her conclusions as her findings evolved around factors like staff skills, knowledge and understanding, assessing, understanding and meeting the needs of children in language, the classroom culture and environment, the talk and tell and the other support systems.

The study conducted by Bay, Cetin, and Hartman (2013) is also applicable to this study as it contains document analysis as a data collection tool. Their study was based on the
comparative analysis of the materials and the curricula towards writing preparation studies used in America and Turkey pre-schools. Their study was conducted with four to five year old children in each country who were randomly selected from four classrooms, that is, two classrooms per country. The purpose of the study was to examine and compare pre-school classroom writing materials and the use of curriculum in the classroom between the two countries. They used document analysis to study the writing materials and the curricula of both countries. They took pictures of writing materials in each country’s classrooms in order to identify the materials. Documents about the curriculum of each country were studied and analyzed which led to the findings that USA pre-school classes offer more opportunities for children to develop writing than those from Turkey pre – school classes.

3.3.2 Analysis of Quantitative data

In this study a descriptive statistics was used as it utilized the collection of data and examined the techniques that produced reports concerning correlation and variation. It included statistical procedures that were used to describe the sampled learners and data collected from them. It transmuted a set of numbers into a single number that describes the whole data. It reflected the average of the sample. Burns and Grove (2003) asserted that descriptive statistics provide a reflection of a particular condition as it naturally happens. It also gave a picture of literacy levels attained by the learners of the same researched categories at both entry and exit levels in their 2013 Grade 3 ANA results.

As mentioned earlier, inferential tests were used to examine relationships between variables. Inferential statistics which examine relationships or associations between two or more variables answer questions that are associational. For example, the first question is interested in finding the nature of the relationship between learners’ prior
knowledge and the academic performance at both levels (entry and exit levels). In this study, the Pearson Chi-square test of association was used to analyze data, (Cohen et al. 2007). They stated that Pearson Chi-square test is used to test whether a statistically significant relationship exists between two categorical variables (prior learning and academic performance). It accompanies a cross tabulation between two variables, categorical independent and dependent variable. The Chi-square is a statistical test that examines variations. It was used to test the hypothesis of no association between the groups, population, or criteria, as Hopkins (2008) states. Despite its limitations of its sensitivity to small sample size or small frequencies and its failure in giving much information about the strength of the relationship or its significance in the population, it was able to test the relationship between prior learning and academic performance. It will also be used to compare observed data that we could not expect to obtain according to specific hypothesis. Tallies were compared and categorical responses counted between the groups. Chi-square was used to analyse the first research question which seeks to find out if there is a relationship between prior learning and academic performance of learners in isiZulu.

### 3.3.2.1 Testing of the hypothesis

The first hypothesis that was tested in this section was:

- There is a relationship between prior learning and learners’ high academic performance in isiZulu in Grade 1 (entry point) and Grade 1 (exit level).

The corresponding first research question is:

- What is the nature of the relationship between prior learning and learners’ academic performance in isiZulu at entry and exit points?
There are two variables in this question. Prior learning is the independent variable whereas academic performance is the dependent variable. Prior learning in this study refers to exposure to Grade R and academic performance then refers to the performance of learners in Grade 1 at the threshold and Grade 3 at the end of the Foundation Phase schooling.

Learners were therefore unaware of their categories so that they could perform naturally. Even though it was time consuming, it produced evidence regarding the hypothesized cause-effect relationship and controlled the variables involved. It also assisted in discovering if there was any unexpected relationship between the sampled learners.

The second hypothesis tested in this section was:

- Learners enter Grade 1 with high literacy attainment level skills.

Thus the corresponding second research question is:

- To what extent have learners attained isiZulu Home Language literacy skills by the time they enter Grade 1?

In presenting data, the Likert scale was used. Scores of 1 to 4 were used as measurement data for the study as per the rubric displayed below. This data was captured in the software computer programme called “Statistical Programming for Social Science (SPSS)”. Numerical codes were used for computing raw data as follows:

1= poor: scored 0-39%: has mastered few literacy skills.

2= satisfactory: scored 40-49%: half the literacy skills achieved.
3= good and: scored 50-59%: key aspects of all literacy skills achieved.

4= very good: these scored 80-100%: all literacy skills achieved.

### RUBRIC ON LISTENING AND SPEAKING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1= poor: has mastered few skills</th>
<th>2= satisfactory: half the skills achieved</th>
<th>3= good: Key aspects of all literacy skills achieved</th>
<th>4= very good: all literacy skills achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very inactive in class and during break times.</td>
<td>Communicates in class and break times but with few friends.</td>
<td>Communicates in class and break times with friends from the same grade.</td>
<td>Highly sociable and communicates in class and break times and with more friends from different grades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties in Identifying, naming and matching simple shapes and colours.</td>
<td>Identifying, naming, and matching half of the simple shapes and colours at a moderate level.</td>
<td>Identifying, naming and matching simple shapes and colours.</td>
<td>High level of Identifying, naming and matching all simple shapes and colours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low levels of listening and recalling word sequences in order.</td>
<td>Listens and recalls some words sequences in order.</td>
<td>Listens and recalls words sequences in order.</td>
<td>High level of listening and recalling word sequences in order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggles with class rhymes.</td>
<td>Copes with few class rhymes.</td>
<td>Copes with most class rhymes.</td>
<td>Copes with all class rhymes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No signs of listening with enjoyment displayed.</td>
<td>Listens to a story with minimal enjoyment.</td>
<td>Listens to a story with enjoyment.</td>
<td>Listens to a story showing high level of enjoyment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens to a story without comprehension</td>
<td>Listens to a story with a minimal level of comprehension</td>
<td>Listens to a story with comprehension</td>
<td>High level of listening to a story with comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes listens but interrupts the speaker most often.</td>
<td>Listens and rarely interrupts the speaker.</td>
<td>Listens and does not interrupt the speaker.</td>
<td>Listens attentively and does not interrupt the speaker at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names and points few body parts.</td>
<td>Names and points most body parts.</td>
<td>Names and points to all the body parts.</td>
<td>Confidently names and points to all the body parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very passive in discussions and asking questions.</td>
<td>Participates in discussions with no or very few questions asked.</td>
<td>Participates in discussions and asks questions.</td>
<td>Highly participates in discussions and asks creative questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RUBRIC ON READING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1= poor: has mastered few skills</th>
<th>2= satisfactory: half the skills achieved</th>
<th>3= good: key aspects of all literacy skills achieved</th>
<th>4= very good: all literacy skills achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates limited ability in reading picture books and makes</td>
<td>Demonstrates satisfactory ability in reading picture books and making</td>
<td>Achieves the required level in picture reading and making</td>
<td>Reads picture books and making fruitful meaning out of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to recognize own handwriting.</td>
<td>Recognizes own handwriting after a long time or through assistance.</td>
<td>Recognizes own handwriting.</td>
<td>Recognizes own handwriting without being hesitant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holds the book upside down or any wrong direction.</td>
<td>Holds the book correctly after given assistance.</td>
<td>Ability to hold the book right way up.</td>
<td>Ability to hold the book on the first attempt right way up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to read own name.</td>
<td>Reads own names after assistance</td>
<td>Ability to read own names.</td>
<td>Confidently reads own name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few book concepts have been developed.</td>
<td>Book concepts have been partially developed.</td>
<td>Most of the book concepts have been developed.</td>
<td>All the book concepts like book cover, title and back have been developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few or no achievement in recognizing and pointing out common objects in pictures.</td>
<td>Moderate levels of recognizing and pointing out common objects in pictures</td>
<td>Ability to recognize and point out common objects in pictures.</td>
<td>High levels of recognizing and pointing out common objects in pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes and read few or no</td>
<td>Mastered the satisfactory levels</td>
<td>Recognizes and reading numerals</td>
<td>Ability to recognize and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>numerals from 1 to 10.</td>
<td>in recognizing and reading some numerals from 1 to 10.</td>
<td>from 1 to 10.</td>
<td>read simple numerals from 1 to 10 and more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very few or no vowels and alphabets can be read.</td>
<td>Some vowels and alphabets can be read through assistance.</td>
<td>Able to read most vowels and alphabets.</td>
<td>Ability to read all vowels and alphabets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RUBRIC IN WRITING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1= poor: has mastered few skills</th>
<th>2= satisfactory: half the skills achieved</th>
<th>3= good: key aspects of all literacy skills achieved</th>
<th>4= very good: all literacy skills achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannot write own name at all.</td>
<td>Writes own name with minor errors</td>
<td>Able to write own name.</td>
<td>Clearly writes own name with confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot copy known letters in own names.</td>
<td>Copies some known letters in own name.</td>
<td>Copies known letters in own name.</td>
<td>Copies known letters in names with speed and without being hesitant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to write from left to right.</td>
<td>Writes from left to right in some writings.</td>
<td>Writes from left to right.</td>
<td>Write clearly from left to right in all writings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs to be developed in writing using the correct sitting position.</td>
<td>Sometimes writes using the correct sitting position.</td>
<td>Writes using the correct sitting position.</td>
<td>Writes using the correct sitting position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to write using the correct starting point.</td>
<td>Writes using the correct starting point at satisfactory level.</td>
<td>Able to write using the correct starting point.</td>
<td>Writes using the correct starting point in all formal and informal writings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to write simple numerals</td>
<td>Able to write most simple numerals.</td>
<td>Able to write simple numerals from 1 to 10.</td>
<td>Able to write simple numerals from 1 to 10 and more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot copy any simple numeral.</td>
<td>Copies some of the simple numerals from 1 to 10.</td>
<td>Correctly copies all the simple numerals from 1 to 10.</td>
<td>Correctly copies all the simple numerals from 1 to 10 and more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to draw pictures that convey messages.</td>
<td>Draws pictures at satisfactory levels that convey messages.</td>
<td>Draws pictures that convey messages.</td>
<td>Very creative in drawing pictures that convey messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot write all the vowels.</td>
<td>Writes some vowels at a satisfactory level.</td>
<td>Writes all the vowels.</td>
<td>Correctly writes all the vowels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to write all the alphabets.</td>
<td>Writes few alphabets at an acceptable level.</td>
<td>Writes all the alphabets.</td>
<td>Correctly writes all the alphabets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RUBRIC FOR HANDWRITING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1= poor: has mastered few skills</th>
<th>2= satisfactory: half the skills achieved</th>
<th>3= good: key aspects of all literacy skills achieved</th>
<th>4= very good: all literacy skills achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unable to hold the pen</td>
<td>Holds a pen in a correct manner</td>
<td>Correctly holds a pen</td>
<td>Correctly holds a pen in a correct manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of the writing tools in low levels.</td>
<td>Ability to use some of the writing tools.</td>
<td>Correctly uses a variety of writing tools like wax crayons, pencils, paintbrushes, etc.</td>
<td>Usage of a variety writing tools like wax crayons, pencils, paintbrushes, etc in a meaningful way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot copy letters, patterns and words.</td>
<td>Copies some letters patterns or words but not always using a correct starting point.</td>
<td>Copies letters, patterns or words using the correct starting point.</td>
<td>Outstandingly copies letters patterns or words using the correct starting point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracing or connecting dotted lines at low levels.</td>
<td>Tracing or connecting of dotted lines at satisfactory level.</td>
<td>Correctly tracing or connecting dotted lines.</td>
<td>High level of tracing and connecting dotted lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low levels of forming letters using crayons, paint brushing and finger painting.</td>
<td>Partially developed in forming letters using crayons, paint brushing and finger painting.</td>
<td>Able to form letters using crayons, paint brushing and finger painting.</td>
<td>Very creative in forming letters using crayons, paint brushing and finger painting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracing simple outlines of pictures at a low standard.</td>
<td>Moderate level at tracing simple outlines of pictures.</td>
<td>Able to trace simple outlines of pictures.</td>
<td>Innovative in tracing simple outlines of pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine motor control</td>
<td>Development of Fine motor control</td>
<td>Fine motor control</td>
<td>High levels in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity</td>
<td>fine motor control in cutting pictures using scissors at a satisfactory level</td>
<td>development of fine motor control in cutting pictures using scissors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays low levels of development in eye-hand coordination.</td>
<td>Moderate level in the development of eye-hand coordination.</td>
<td>Highly developed in eye-hand coordination.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data was organized and categorized according to the learners` prior learning and put on a frequency distribution table. This table was used to present the raw data that showed the number of Grade 1 learners who graduated from Grade R in school-based sites, those who did not attend any Grade R at all, and those who attended Grade R in community sites. The raw data was organized and tabulated using a cross tabulation. In short, the data was summarized and organized in a table. The frequency for each category was plotted. A cross – tabulation which is sometimes called a contingency table was used. This was chosen as it assisted in understanding whether there were relationships that existed between two or more variables. It also made it easier to analyze the data.

Data analysis focused on the activities given and some observed from the Grade 1 learners as well as the results for 2013 Grade 3 ANA tests in literacy. The researcher started with Grade 1 learners that attended Grade R in school based centres. Every learner was analyzed according to each literacy skill tested. These literacy skills were listening, speaking, reading, writing and handwriting. Under each literacy skill, ten activities were assessed. These activities used scores of 1 to 4 as highlighted above. An average for each learner in all the literacy skills was calculated. Calculation of averages was also done for each learner per activity in each literacy skill. Thereafter a group
average per literacy skill and also the average for all the literacy skills tested were plotted on a table. Data was thereafter analyzed in percentages according to each activity under a specific literacy skill.

The same process was done to those learners graduated from their Grade R in community based sites and those who did not attend to any Grade R. The three categories were then compared in all the literacy skills tested. The averages of each category was used and plotted on a table. The same data was then plotted in a bar graph. A bar graph was chosen in this study as it made it easy for everyone to analyze the given data.

Results for 2013 Grade 3 ANA in literacy from the sampled schools were analyzed in the three categories. These categories together with their frequencies were plotted in a frequency distribution table which also reflected the total number of learners whose results were analyzed. There were comparisons for the categories using level 1 to 7. Level 1= Not Achieved (0-29%), 2= Elementary Achievement (30-39%), 3= Moderate Achievement (40-49%), 4= Adequate Achievement (50-59%), 5= Substantial Achievement (60-69%), 6= Meritorious Achievement (70-79%) and 7= Outstanding Achievement (80-100). The data was thereafter converted into percentages and plotted on a bar graph.

For better understanding at the end of analysis, bar graphs are presented for readability. The bar graphs present learners’ performance from the three categories (performance of learners who attended Grade R, who did not attend Grade R, and those who went to Grade R which is based in community sites) which are placed in juxtaposition to compare learners’ academic performance and the literacy attainment levels in their home language when they enter and exit Foundation Phase.
3.3.3 Validity and Reliability

The research instruments used in this study were valid as they were able to measure what they were suppose to measure and were capable of answering the research questions, Borg and Gall (1989). Due to the age of the learners, observations and activities were very relevant for gathering data in them as the researcher was able collect first hand information as she was with them inside and outside the classroom. Document analysis and interviews were able to reveal the relationship between prior learning and learners` academic performance in isiZulu at entry and exit points.

All the research instruments used in this study were reliable in that they were able to achieve the same results as they were used in measuring the same learners under the similar situation. Maree and Fraser (2004) stated that reliability of a research instrument refers to the level of consistency or accuracy of measuring what it supposed to measure. For an example, different activities/tests were given to the same learners and they came out with the same results reflecting that prior learning has a positive impact in the development of literacy skills in children. Thus, triangulation was adopted in this study.

To ensure validity and reliability, a pilot study was also conducted at the initial stage of data collection. Vogt (1993) describes a pilot study as a preliminary study used by the researcher in trying out the procedures of conducting a particular research and discovering challenges, if any, before the main study begins. Polit, Beck, and Hungler (2001) refer to it as a feasibility study conducted in a small scale preparing for the major study. Welman and Kruger (1999) discovered the value of a pilot study as identifying indistinct items in research instruments, clarifying non-verbal behavior of participants on the content or wording used in the data gathering tool that might cause discomfort and leads to possible flow of measurement procedures. This assists in editing and making adjustments to the study. Vogt (1993) referred to the pilot study as a research project’s “dress rehearsal”. Due to the nature of this study, the same sample was used in the
study as the data needed by the study was supposed to be collected at the beginning of the year whilst learners were still fresh from homes or Grade R classes.

3.4 QUALITATIVE APPROACH

This section of the study is qualitative in nature and is located within the interpretive paradigm. Miles and Huberman (1994) and Creswell (1998) argue that a qualitative approach is a process of a study that investigates on a social human problem where the researcher is conducting his/her study in a natural situation and builds a whole representation by means of a rich description and explanation together with a careful examination of participants` views. Berg (2007) as cited by Tewksbury (2009) argues that this approach looks at the meanings, concepts, characteristics, metaphors, definitions, symbols, and descriptions of things. This is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.3) who define it as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices … turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. A qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.”

Qualitative approach gives an in-depth of knowledge on how newly admitted Grade 1 learners perform in literacy activities that involve listening and speaking (Cohen et al., 2000). It also assisted in surfacing the experiences of educators in dealing with diverse learners who enroll for this grade, and furthermore, to understand some issues in the performance of Grade 1 learners in literacy. Willing (2001) as cited by Griffin (2004) contends that this approach is concerned with meaning, how people make sense of the world around them and how they experience events from their perspectives. This is
supported by Tewksbury (2009, p.39) who stated that this approach centralizes and places primary value on complete understandings, and how people understand, experience and operate within milieus that are dynamic and social in their foundation and structure. According to Kura (2012), the emphasis of this approach is on a naturalistic, interpretive approach in order to understand the meanings individuals attach to phenomena based on their actions, beliefs, values, decisions, etc. within their social contexts.

Mashiya (2011) used the qualitative approach when studying the factors hindering the use of mother tongue (isiZulu) as LOLT in rural Foundation Phase classes in Kwazulu-Natal. The challenge of language pedagogy that was encountered by student educators during their practice teaching gave rise to her study. The student educators had complications when they had to practice literacy skills taught at their tertiary institution as schools were using both English and isiZulu in teaching Grades R and 1 and largely English in Grades 2 and 3 instead of isiZulu as their mother tongue as stipulated in policy. She therefore wanted to discover why educators were not implementing the policy. Her sample constituted of 20 Foundation Phase educators teaching Grades R - 2 from three primary schools. These educators were purposively sampled. She used observations and focus groups to gather data. Using this approach assisted her in reaching precise conclusions on the factors leading to this practice which included amongst others: lack of proficiency in isiZulu by educators; competencies of children in the two languages and their prior knowledge; the idea that English advances learners, and lack of parental involvement.

Msila (2011) also used this approach in her study conducted in Port Elizabeth which investigated the factors affecting Black parents in preferring English over their indigenous languages. In this case, IsiXhosa is the referred indigenous language. In her study, she had three assistant researchers working with her. The sample consisted of 30 parents and 80 preschoolers from four day centres that were purposively sampled. She
gathered data for thirteen days in each centre using observations and interviews. Interviews were formally based-in educators. Amongst the things that were observed included educators` and learners` roles in a language class; cognitive skills in language; observing the response of learners from questions on storyline; oral skills in one or two languages, and observing language skills outside the classroom. This approach assisted her in successfully reaching the conclusions of her study as the findings reveal that learners are influenced by their parents and other societal factors to prefer English to indigenous languages.

This approach has a number of advantages as referred to by Griffin (2004), Kirk and Miller (1986), Cohen et al., (2000), Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Mahoney and Goertz (2006):

- Focus on the operation of social processes in greater depth.
- Allows flexibility for the researcher to gather data during the study.
- Ability to communicate with the participants in their own language.
- Rich and detailed data giving enough room for understanding study.
- Small sample was purposively selected for a specific criterion.
- Ability to facilitate sensitive study topic if trust is developed between the researched and the researcher.
- Provides in-depth analysis of experiences, understandings and perspectives of the phenomenon.

Based on the above strengths, this approach will be able to provide findings of the interpretations of the data collected for this study. Regardless of its strengths, this approach has its own limitations as referred by Griffin (2004), Kirk and Miller(1986), Cohen et al., (2000), Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Mahoney and Goetz (2006):

- Being expensive as it involved travelling costs for a number of days.
- High level of experience needed to get the required information from the participants.
Consuming a lot of time having to deal with an individual participant and follow his/her behavior and doings.

Might lead to biasness in explaining the phenomena as the researcher works closely with the participants.

High degree of interpretation is needed during data collection.

Challenge in explaining the validity and reliability of the information due to subjectivity.

This research study was able to utilize the strengths of the qualitative research as the researcher successfully gathered data about the participants` experiences, understandings and perspectives of the research problem. She managed to build up trust with the participants as she was supposed to work very close with them. The use of their own language made it easier for the participants to communicate freely with the researcher which led her to gain rich and more detailed data for the study. She failed to overcome some of the disadvantages of using this approach like that of consuming a lot of time as it demanded individual attention in following the participant`s behaviour. More days were needed in gathering data which led to high financial travelling costs. Due to her experience of teaching young children in primary schools, she successfully used her expertise in gathering data from them.

Jensen (2002) stated that the interpretive paradigm is aimed at recognizing experiences through the meanings people assign to them. Walsham (1993) is of the idea that there is nothing like correct or incorrect theories. Rather, they are viewed according to how they interest the researcher and the others involved. This is also supported by Willis (1995) who said that there is no correct route or specific method to knowledge. Interpretivists build upon an in-depth assessment of the phenomena of interest. They consider people as their primary sources of information in that they study individuals` understandings, interpretations, perceptions, behaviours, beliefs and meanings of the world around them and make sense out it through their social context, Cohen et al., (2000), Blaikie, (2000), Mason, (2002). They felt that it is important to understand the subjective world of an
individual’s experience and study the phenomena from the inside of a person so as to get an understanding from within.

Klein and Myers (1999) state that interpretive research presupposes that an individual knowledge of reality is gained only through a lot of social constructions like language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents, tools, and other artifacts. This is supported by Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) who argued that interpretive studies think that people create and relate their own subjective and inter-subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them. They emphasize that it is therefore crucial for the interpretive researchers to try and understand phenomena through accessing the meanings participants assign to them.

There are a number of advantages of using an interpretive approach in this study as it gave an opportunity to obtain insight of the problem under investigation. It is possible for the researcher to present both his/ her constructions and that of the participants. It makes it possible to generate new knowledge and provide valuable information for future studies and practices. In addition, the researcher is directly involved in the collection of the data and analysis (Mason, 2002; Cohen et al., 2007; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Morse, 1994). Despite its advantages, this approach has disadvantages as it can be unreliable as it deals with a small sample of a larger population and that the researcher cannot be able to cover everything. Winters (1999) stated that it does not allow for historical, economic, structural or environmental influences on individual experiences.

3.4.1 Instruments used to generate qualitative data

Two instruments were used to generate qualitative data and these are observations and interviews.
3.4.1.1 Observations

Bordan (1972) as cited by Wilkinson and Bigmingham (2003, p.116) describes observation as “a research method characterized by a prolonged period of intense social interrelation between the researcher and the subjects, in the milieu of the latter, during which time the data in the form of field notes, are unobtrusively and systematically collected.” In this method a researcher must monitor the behavior and record it without having direct contact with the participant. Cooper and Schindler (2001, p. 374) affirm that observation enables a researcher to look afresh at everyday behavior that otherwise might be taken for granted or go unnoticed.

Due to the age of the main participants who are supposed to be 6 years as per admission policy of schools and the data to be collected, observations were used as research instruments. Bordan (1972) as cited by Wilkinson and Bigmingham (2003, p.116) argues that observation is a handy tool for researchers as it allows researchers to understand much more about what goes on in the complex real world situation than they can ever discover simply by asking questions of those who experience them. He also mentions that observation is about reporting the activities the participant carries out in different settings and situations. During observation the researcher got first-hand information as she watched the understandings and behavior of the learners inside and outside classroom, thus getting a wide range of data. This instrument assisted in developing a holistic perspective of this research study. Bailey (1994) contended that observational data can be useful when studying nonverbal behavior, behavior in natural settings and longitudinal analysis.

Learners were observed during the teaching and learning process and during play times. The researcher’s presence in the classroom caused the learners to behave differently which is known as the Hawthorne effect. Thus, she familiarized herself with
them in the classroom situation so that they could behave naturally in her presence. This method of data gathering was viewed by Cresswell and Miller (2000) as the process of gathering first-hand information as the researcher has to observe the participants at the research site. This assisted in understanding what these learners can do and know regarding literacy at the threshold level, thus gaining insight about their readiness. The ways in which these learners interpret and understand literacy at their early years was observed. This is a demanding and taxing method, but it assisted in discovering information that can be difficult to recognize. It demanded that the researcher possess listening, looking and questioning skills.

Observations have their strengths of granting opportunity in identifying unanticipated outcomes, providing direct information about the participants and being very flexible and unstructured. However, it has its drawbacks as it is time consuming. It is also expensive as it involved travelling and meal costs as the schools were in deep rural areas with bad terrain and far away from the researcher’s place of residence. It compromises anonymity and privacy. Using this tool may affect the behavior of the participants as young children are normally not free when there is an outsider and the educator might be tempted to change his teaching style to please the researcher. It also demands the skill of observing in order to gather valuable data as selective perception may distort it (Siddhu and Singh; 1992 and Cohen et al., 2000).

Lee (2010) used observations in his study to gather data. The sample constituted of 15 two to three years old toddlers, their parents and educators. These toddlers were attending a full day program in an early education class in an urban setting. The purpose of this study was to discover whether parental involvement has an impact on the children’s literacy development in the classroom setting by reading books with their child during morning transition times before they leave. He focused on morning transition times and observed the role of storybook reading with parents in class. He also observed the interactions of parents with educators and their children and how these
interactions influenced their children. Through these observations, he was able to arrive at conclusions that parental involvement in storybook reading during morning transition times facilitates smooth morning transitions, provides opportunities for literacy development to young children, and allows direct/indirect interactions between parents and educators.

Observations were also used by Oueini, Bahous, and Nabhani (2008) in their case study on the impact of read-aloud in the classroom. The study constituted of 53 five to six years old kindergarten children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who were learning French as a second language while they spoke Arabic as their home language. The purpose of this case study was to look at the impact of a read-aloud strategy on the development of children’s vocabulary and comprehension skills by recording their conversations and writings as they were responding to the stories. The read-aloud strategy consisted of two educators that were reading aloud story books to children and explaining unfamiliar words. The greater percentage of these children commenced schooling lacking the basic home literacy experiences. One of the researchers took eight weeks observing classes as a non-participant observer. She used a diary and an audio tape in transcribing the conversations between the educator and the learners in the read-aloud sessions. The educator and the learners were free to have the researcher in their class as she used to observe them even before the start of their study. The main focus of the observation was on the responses that were given by the children during the sessions. Their findings revealed gains in children’s vocabulary and comprehension skills and that these learners were able to use new vocabulary words and become engaged in analysis and synthesis during their participation in discussions of the read-aloud stories.

The researcher observed literacy activities that were performed by learners inside and outside the classroom. Regarding speaking and listening, learners were observed during story telling. A story about a young girl’s first day at school was read to them. The
intention was for the learners to be able to relate to their own experiences as they had recently encountered the same incident. During this activity, they were observed on: listening to a story showing enjoyment; listening to a story with comprehension; ability to listen without interrupting the speaker, and ability to participate in class and respond to questions.

For a reading activity, books were put on their desks and placed in awkward positions. They were told to take those books and read any page that was of interest to them. During this time the researcher observed the way they were holding their books, turning of book pages, development of book concepts like title, cover, back and front, reading picture books and making meanings from the pictures.

The learners were also observed during the writing activity. They were given A4 papers to write their names on. The researcher observed their writing from left to right, writing using the correct starting point and their ability to write own name. Handwriting was observed when they were given a variety of writing material and an A4 page with pictures and dotted lines. The way they held a pen, use of variety writing materials like scissors, wax crayons and paint brushes, using the correct sitting position, ability to trace or connect dotted lines, development of eye-hand coordination, and the development of fine motor skills was also observed.

The researcher was supposed to understand the different activities by the participants through observing them. This is supported by Cresswell (2002, p. 58) who describes observation as the process of gathering first-hand information by observing people and places at the research site. He asserts that the researcher can be a participant-observer or a nonparticipant-observer. This assisted the researcher in understanding what learners actually do and know regarding literacy at entry points. The ways in which
learners interpret and understand literacy in their early years when they start formal schooling was also observed.

Chatsman (1992) as cited by Westbrook (1994) identifies four positions on a continuum of roles that the researcher has to play when using the observation technique: complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, and complete observer. In this case the researcher was sometimes a complete observer and did not participate at all and a participant-as-observer. This type of research instrument is more demanding and taxing than any other research methods, but it assisted in discovering information about certain activities that occur regularly but very difficult to recognize. The researcher exercised her observation, listening and questioning skills in a focused and strategic way.

3.4.1.2 Interviews

Cohen et al., (2007) define an interview as a flexible instrument that is used to gather data which enables multi-sensory channels (verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard) to be used. Kvale (1996, p.14) maintains that an interview is “an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data.” It is not a normal conversation but a planned one aiming at achieving a particular objective through questioning and getting a response from the interviewee.

Interviews were chosen for this study because of its advantages cited by Cohen et al., (2007), Oppenheim (1992), Westbrook (1994), and Lincoln and Guba (1985):

- They provide in-depth and descriptive data.
- Flexible for the researcher to make adjustments.
Provides insight information.
Provides high response rates as they can be rescheduled to suit time and location of the interviewee.
The researcher is present when interviewing the respondent and can clarify the question if need arises.
Interviewer can create new questions to fill in omissions or to check the understanding of what has already been heard.
Opinions and ideas are clearly stated as the interviewer can explain and expand on his / her opinions, provide accuracy and relevance.

Despite its advantages, this data gathering tool has a lot of disadvantages. This involves: compromising anonymity and privacy; less reliability as it is difficult to achieve consistency and objectivity; difficulties in data analysis; expensive to conduct as it sometimes involves expenses like travelling, and biasness from the interviewee’s responses (Cohen et al.; 2007, Siddhu, and Singh; 1992, and Denscombe, 1999). The age of the learners was the most important factor that pushed the researcher to choose this data gathering instrument as other valuable information that is needed for this study can be made available by the educators. All the participating educators signed a consent form to voluntarily participate in the study after alerting them of their rights during the study. The researcher requested their permission to record their responses but one educator was not comfortable for being recorded and her responses were handwritten. Their transcripts were coded and ended up having main themes constructed from texts.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified two types of interviews: structured and unstructured interviews. They mention that structured interviews are helpful if the researcher is clear of what s/he does not know and can construct questions that will give him/her the required information. It is a formal and standardized type of an interview as respondents are given the same type of questions and the researcher should rely solely on the respondents to offer information. More emphasis is placed on the interviewee’s
thoughts as the researcher simply lays down the topic of concern and lets the interviewee freely voice out his/her opinion. This has a great benefit as the researcher get an opportunity for in-depth investigation.

Semi structured interviews were conducted with the educators for collecting data. Sukhia and Mehrotra (1993) contend that in a semi structured interview the researcher has a set of planned issues and questions to be answered by the respondent. The interviewee is asked open-ended questions and is free to express his/her ideas or point of interest. These interviews were considered because “they enable depth, nuance and complexity in data to be captured and are generative in that new knowledge may be uncovered” (Mason, 2002; Legard et al., 2003 as cited by Carcary, 2009, p. 17). This method allowed for collecting more detailed data as follow-up questions can be asked to get sufficient information from the participants. This method was chosen because of “its flexibility to probe, to clarify, and to create new questions based on what has already been heard.” (Westbrook 1994, p.244).

Part of this method’s disadvantages is that it produces a large amount of textual data which might confuse the researcher when analyzing data. Interview results might compromise the authenticity of the information given as the respondent might be tempted to give responses to gratify the researcher. Interviewing is a social and interpersonal meeting and power factors can negatively influence the entire process. This demands that the interviewer must guard against his/ her position so as not to influence the respondents when answering questions. It is time consuming. It is difficult to analyse data as semi structured and unstructured interviews are not pre-coded. It is very difficult to maintain consistency and objectivity, thus less reliability. It can be an invasion to privacy of participants (Cohen et al., 2000; Sukhia and Mehrotra, 1993, and Guba & Lincoln 1994).
Lenyai (2011) used this data gathering method in her study. She purposively sampled 10 primary schools in townships in Gauteng province where she randomly sampled three educators in each school, one from each grade. She studied First Additional Language teaching at the Foundation Phase of schools in disadvantaged areas. She wanted to discover on whether educators in the Foundation Phase taught English literacy to promote communication skills and to prepare them to use it as LOLT in Grade 4. She was concerned whether these educators from such poor areas had the skills to teach English as the First Additional Language in the Foundation Phase and produce competent learners. She interviewed educators and discovered that the methods that they used during teaching and learning did not develop learners` communication and comprehension skills. She felt that this was contributed by the educators` beliefs that knowledge of reading in home language is the prerequisite for reading in English as its teaching was postponed in Grade 1 and ended up not being emphasized in Grade 2.

Sahin, Sak, and Tuncer (2013) used semi structured interview in their study when comparing pre-school and first grade educators in school readiness. The sample constituted 35 pre-school and 35 first grade educators working in public and private schools. They mentioned that these educators both faced the positive and negative side in the process of school readiness. The sample was purposively selected in this study. They used basic qualitative research to compare educators` views about school readiness. All the pre-school educators were females and most of them worked in public schools, but most of the first grade educators were males and a greater percentage of them also worked in public schools. They conducted only semi structured interview with all the participants for data collection. Some of the participants allowed the researchers to audio record them after the explanation was given that they wanted to capture all their responses and to save time in handwriting their responses. On the other hand some of the participants denied the recordings and the researcher captured the responses by hand. The interviews were conducted individually with each participant in his/her convenient time with the duration of 30 - 60 minutes. The researchers read the transcripts several times to get the overall idea of the interview and used the word
repetition technique which was later coded after considering the frequency use of words. Through the use of this data collection tool, the researchers were able to determine the main themes at the end of the study according to their research findings. The themes were: defining school readiness; pre-school education for school readiness, difficulties in school readiness: effective people and institutions in the school readiness process, and suggestions to school readiness.

3.4.2 Analysis of Qualitative data

To present qualitative data, short case studies were used. Short case studies are deemed necessary in presenting the samples of work that learners produce in order to display their attainment literacy levels in isiZulu. A part of question two is presented in a qualitative form since the focus of part one of this question was on quantitative data. To give more meaning to the learners’ attainment literacy levels in isiZulu, the researcher has seen it proper to present the findings of this question in a narrative form as well. Therefore to present this data, short case studies with learners’ samples of work are displayed. The aim of this section is to address the following objective:

- To establish the extent to which learners have attained isiZulu Home Language literacy skills by the time they enter Grade 1.

Furthermore, qualitative data is also presented in text using quotes. Quotes illustrate the point the research intends to make. This will be used to present the responses obtained through interviews with educators of these young children. It is important to present quotes as they are because they can never be generalized; they are a one man’s voice. It also addressed the last two objectives of the study which are:
• To ascertain how teachers identify learners’ actual development level in literacy isiZulu.
• To determine espoused approaches to the teaching of learners who are at different levels of development in IsiZulu literacy.

3.4.3 Analysis of Qualitative data

Interviews were analyzed using the descriptive analysis technique as discussed by McMillan and Schumacher (1993, p.486). They list four steps towards data reduction and display. The steps below were adopted for this study in an attempt to present and analyse qualitative data.

Step 1

The researcher started by reading the data set obtained from the interviews carried out with educators, as well as the observation notes to get the sense of the data. The researcher wrote down the ideas that come to mind as they read the transcripts.

Step 2

The researcher identified the topics which emerged from the data. A topic is the descriptive name for the subject matter of a piece of text. The researcher wrote down the topics in the margin.

Step 3

The researcher wrote down a list of topics that emerged from the different data sets, thus making it easy to see if there was any duplication. Essentially she now had a set of
topics with which to classify or categorise the data. Classification means to put similar things together in the same group.

**Step 4**

The researcher then applied this provisional classification system on all the data sets. She might abbreviate the topic to a code and then write this code next to the appropriate piece of data.

**3.4.4 Analytical Framework**

The analysis of data is underpinned by Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism. Vygotsky stresses the importance of looking at each child as an individual who learns distinctively. Consequently, the knowledge and skills are worthwhile; learning varies with the individual. The overall goal of education, according to Vygotsky, is to generate and lead development which is the result of social learning through internalisation of culture and social relationships. He repeatedly stresses the importance of past experiences and prior knowledge in making sense of new situations or present experiences. Therefore, all new knowledge and newly introduced skills are greatly influenced by each student’s culture, especially their family environment. Data is analysed through the three stages as highlighted by Lui (2012, p.3). The three stages are: level of actual development, level of proximal development and level of potential development. Data collected will be organized according the three aforementioned stages taking into consideration prior knowledge of the learners.
3.4.4 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is a very important component. Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) standards for evaluating qualitative enquiry was adopted. These standards are credibility, transferability, authenticity and conformability of qualitative study. Different methods of analyzing data to establish trustworthiness were used. Triangulation was considered for this study. Denzin and Lincoln (2000); Miles and Huberman (1994); Bickman and Rog (1998); Cohen et al. (2000), and Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that triangulation is when a researcher uses a variety of data collection instruments and sources of information in order to limit the risk of distortion which normally occurs when using one method and limited sources. In this study, triangulation included observations, document analysis and activities given to learners. This confirmed the results found as these different methods must complement each other in the specific activity being tested. Triangulation is important in order to increase a study’s validity and interpretability (Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher, & Perez- Prado, 2003). Different tactics that assist in ensuring honesty in the population were employed.

Three research assistants were hired during data collection. One of them has a master’s degree in education, the other one has a junior degree in Industrial Psychology and the last one has a matriculation certificate but is furthering her studies for a bachelors’ degree. The assistant researchers were hired to assist in distributing and collecting consent forms, recordings and in taking photos and videos during the process of data gathering. There was training for the research team which was lead by the main researcher on how to go about or what to do when conducting this research. Before gathering data, a meeting was held with the principal of the schools concerned, together with the educators who are part of the sample. The rationale was to confirm that the researcher is a student enrolled for her doctoral studies and is not an official from the Department of Education. The researcher urged them to teach as if she was not present in that particular class in order for the researcher to obtain the reliable data from them.
Data from the different tools complemented each other. The assistant researcher with a master’s degree in education was invited to scrutinize the research findings.

3.5 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The main focus of the study is on learners’ attainment of isiZulu literacy skills as a result of exposure to Grade R which was rolled out in 2010. To measure learners’ literacy attainment skills in their home language, it was deemed necessary to study them at entry point, that is in Grade 1 as well as at exit point, (Grade 3) to see if the universal access to Grade R had a significant effect on the performance of learners. The centres of focus are Grade 1 learners sampled from two schools in the Uthungulu district, as well as their results at the exit point in Grade 3. Their educators were also engaged so as to solidify what was discovered as the result of the activities administered to learners. These two schools are rural in nature. These rural schools were chosen at the researcher anticipated that she will find all the three categories of learners she is researching about. This will in turn assist in reaching conclusive generalizations on how prior learning affects children in rural schools.

3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Yorke (2008, p.59) defines `sampling` as a method of selecting some part of a group to represent the total population. This refers to taking a small part or quantity intended to show what the whole is like. In this study, population meant the total number of individuals who were participating. The sample was intentionally selected according to the needs of the study. This type of sampling is referred to as a purposive sampling. Vockell and Williams (1998, p.451) assert that in this type of sampling, participants are selected to meet particular goals of the researcher, such as ensuring heterogeneity or
involving key persons in the research samples. It falls under the criterion sampling where the chosen sample has to meet a certain criterion in order to answer the research question(s), (Given, 2008). For an example, in this study the sample constituted of Grade 1 learners from rural schools who have attended Grade R in school based sites, community based sites and those who did not attend Grade R at all.

Uthungulu is one of the rural districts in KwaZulu-Natal. A sample of two rural primary schools from Uthungulu District at Nkandla and Mthonjaneni Circuits who are enrolling Grade 1 learners who graduated from Grade R both in satellite and school based centres and those who did not attend any Grade R were chosen for this study. Both schools were identified by considering their geographic location and the LOLT they were offering, as both should be using isiZulu as their LOLT. The socio - economic status, socio- political status and culture of the community was also considered in sampling the schools. Only Grade 1 learners (those who have graduated from Grade R in school based or satellite centres and those who did not attend Grade R) from each sampled school together with their educators were selected.

3.6.1 Learners

The main participants of this study were Grade 1 learners in two rural schools at Uthungulu District. All classes contained both boys and girls. The study ascertained that there were learners who went to school based Grade R, Grade R in community sites, as well as those who did not go to an R class at all. Data was collected within the first months of school re-opening in the first term of the year so as to explore the literacy attainment levels that they bring to Grade 1. The total number of learners who were participants was (34). Most of these learners come from low socio-economic backgrounds. This number of participants was chosen in order to obtain individual
attention from these leaner in the two schools. One hundred and fifty four (154) learners` results who wrote 2013 ANA tests in literacy were analysed in this study.

3.6.2 Educators

Three Grade 1 educators who were teaching the learners (the main participants) were observed during teaching and learning. Unfortunately one of the three educators got sick and passed away in the first weeks of data collection. Formal and informal interviews were conducted with these two educators for assistance in some answers required by the study as educators are taken as the co-characters in assisting learners at schools for literacy development. Educators were interviewed in different stages as those in Grade 1 were interviewed in the middle of data collection and the Grade 3 educators were interviewed towards the end of the data gathering process in order to avoid biasness from the researcher on the responses given by educators. The educators were chosen because they are the ones who are teaching the learners and they assisted the researcher in clarifying some of the questions of interest to the study. Four educators who taught the 2013 Grade 3 learners were interviewed. Such interviews were conducted towards the end of data collection through document analysis of Grade 3 ANA results. These educators assisted in giving information regarding the performance of learners from the three categories of inquiry in their literacy skills at exit points.

3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Simons and Usher (2000, p.1) stated that “ethics has traditionally been seen as a set of general principles invariantly and validity applied to all situations…on the contrary, ethical principles are mediated within the different practices and this take on different
significance in relation to those practices.” Therefore, researchers have to consider all ethics that are located in the specification of the research situation.

The researcher fully revealed her identity and background to the participants. She operated within an ethic of respect to all the participants involved in the study. Gardner (2011, p.5) asserts that ethics must be observed and individuals should be treated fairly, sensitively, with dignity, and within an ethic of respect and freedom from prejudice regardless of age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, cultural identity, partnership status, faith, disability, political belief, or any other significant difference. The researcher was not engaged in any of these or related discriminatory factors.

As the main participants were children, their research ethics in this study were highly considered. This involved protecting them from harm or risk in activities during the study, confidentiality and privacy for learners and consent signed by parents or guardians in allowing them to participate in the study and to withdraw at any time if they wish to opt out (Powell, 2011). Burns (2000) argues that these ethical problems can relate to both the subject matter of the study with its methods and procedures, and goes well beyond the treatment of persons in a free society. The researcher ensured that the principle of non–malfeasance was in place, thus, considering that there is no harm or suffering to all participants and others who might be affected by the research (Cohen et al., 2007).

The researcher sought out consent to conduct the research from the Provincial Head of Department via the Uthungulu District Manager for the schools concerned, educators and parents of the learners to be participants before the commencement of the study. See Appendix A, B, D, E F and G. Informed consent in writing from all participants concerned was obtained. The researcher further ensured that the educators and parents of the learners fully understood the whole process of the research and that they were free to withdraw from the study at anytime.
Confidentiality agreements were made known to all those involved in the study. There was confidentiality and anonymous treatment in the participants’ data (Cohen et al., 2000). The researcher recognized the participant’s entitlement to privacy and their rights to confidentiality and anonymity were made known to them, unless their parents or guardians specifically waived that right. Gardner (2011, p.7) mentions that in such cases, it is in the researcher’s interests to have such a waiver in writing. Disclosure of information that might jeopardize the welfare of the participants was highly restricted. Therefore pseudo names for the selected schools and all the participants were used.

Being the Deputy Chief Education Specialist in the same district who is an educator by profession, the researcher tried to avoid any conflict of interest that should have arisen during the study, for example, the manner or methods used by the educator when teaching and learning takes place. The American Education Research Council (AERA) (2011) states that conflicts of interest arise when the researchers’ personal, professional or financial interests prevent them from performing their professional work in an unbiased manner. This also included non exploitation of the researcher’s participants.

The researcher was not engaged in falsification of data references, claims, or research findings. Sources of others’ work were clearly provided as the study based its theoretical backing on ideas from different theories and authors of different writings. When using others’ data, the authors were referenced so as to prevent plagiarism. The use of incentives in this study was strongly discouraged and avoided as research has shown that incentives have great potential of causing biasness in the responses of the participants. The researcher also applied for an ethical clearance certificate from the ethics committee of the University which was awarded before gathering of data commenced. See Appendix C.
The researcher has maintained the integrity and autonomy of the research like avoiding censorship of or interference with in order to respect self-determination. All information on all the aspects of the study and its possible consequences has been provided. The researcher has also ensured beneficence to all the participants; for example, the study can be of benefit to them as they can be provided with the findings if needed, then they can fill up the gaps, if any. Again, if the study attracts the interest of policy makers or top management in the province and the country, the findings and contributions might contribute to the education system.

3.8 SUMMARY

This chapter provided in-depth procedures that were followed in the process of generating and analyzing data. The qualitative and quantitative approaches with their instruments used in generating data, the delimitation of the study, population and sampling and ethical consideration were provided. The next chapter contains data presentation and interpretation.
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF QUANTITATIVE DATA: LEARNERS’ LITERACY ATTAINMENT LEVELS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, the research design, data collection and analysis were outlined. This chapter presents the quantitative results emanating from the critical analysis of tests / activities conducted with Grade 1 learners as well as the secondary data obtained from the Department of Education documents, the Annual National Assessments (ANA) of 2013 written by the first cohort of Grade 3 learners which attended Grade R as a result of the roll out in 2010.

The first section of quantitative data presented in this section is the findings from an activity administered to Grade 1 learners. The activities focused on five variables: listening, speaking, reading, writing and handwriting. The standardized activities were administered to three groups of learners: learners who attended Grade R in school based sites, learners who attended Grade R in community based sites, as well as learners who did not attend Grade R at all. The motive behind these activities conducted to these three categories of learners was to gauge the success of the roll out of Grade R in 2010; in this way the effectiveness of prior learning was measured.

The second section of this question focused on the exit point where secondary data (ANA results) were analysed. Participants in this section were again categorized into three categories, those who attended a Reception Year class in a school based
environment, in community sites, and the last group are those learners who did not attend a Reception Year class at all.

This chapter therefore entails presentation of data to answer questions one and two of the study. Data is interpreted and analysed and the recommendations after the analysis of data are also presented. In both sections, data will first be presented in a frequency distribution table to show the distribution of all learners in the study.

Data is presented in contingency tables and was subjected to Chi-square statistical analysis to test the two hypotheses. Data was later transferred into a bar graph to show the nature of the relationship between prior learning and academic performance of learners in both entry and exit points. This is where the impact of the roll out of Grade R was measured. Participants in this study include learners who attended a Reception Year class in schools, in community sites, as well as those who did not attend a Reception Year class at all. The attainment of literacy in isiZulu was then measured in order to see the impact prior learning (Reception Year class) has on learners’ performance in literacy. The first part of data to be presented will focus on the entry point (Grade R) assessment results and the second part will focus on the second part of the research question which is exit point (Grade 3).

These are Grade 1 learners who were categorized into three categories: those who attended the Reception Year class in school, in community sites, as well as those who did not attend a Reception Year class.
4.2 RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

This question focuses on learners at the entry point as well as at the exit point. The entry point in this study refers to Grade 1. As mentioned earlier, the data presented in this section is generated from activities administered to Grade 1 learners at the threshold of the year.

This section seeks to answer the first research question:

*What is the nature of the relationship between prior learning and learners’ academic performance in isiZulu at entry and exit points?*

4.2.1 Performance of learners at the entry point (Grade 1)

Three categories of learners were sampled from two schools. Due to the intensity of conducting activities with young learners, only a few learners were sampled. Activities administered to Grade 1 learners were those covered in Grade R isiZulu Home Language literacy curriculum document (CAPS). Activities administered were listening and speaking (oral), reading, writing and handwriting. These learners were sampled from two different schools with the same characteristics considering their geographic location and the socio-economic status of the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>Total Number of Learners per school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uthungulu</td>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>02</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In school one 18 learners were sampled out of which 7 of them graduated Grade R in school based sites, 5 in community sites and 6 were without any Grade R. The researcher wanted to have the exact number of 6 learners in each category, but she erroneously put one learner who graduated Grade R from another school into the category of those who are from community based sites who was later categorized accordingly. That is why there are more learners in the category of those who attended Grade R in school based sites.

Sixteen learners from school two were sampled. Five graduated Grade R in school based sites, 6 in community based sites and 5 were without any Grade R. In school 2 learners graduated Grade R in two different community sites. Therefore the researcher decided to take the equal number of 3 learners in each community site - that is why she ended up having 6 learners from community based sites.

The total number of the sample was determined by the number of learners who did not go through any Grade R. That was done in order to balance the three categories to be studied. In both schools the number of learners without any prior learning was less, such that there were 6 in school 1 and 5 in school 2. Secondly, it would be difficult should it be a big sample as the researcher was supposed to work closely with each individual learner in every activity.

*Table 4.2 Distribution of learners according to their prior learning exposure*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior Learning</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School based Grade R</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community sites Grade R</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Grade R</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=34
4.2.1.1 Hypothesis one

Reiteration of hypothesis number one:

There is a relationship between prior learning and learners’ high academic performance in IsiZulu in Grade 1 (entry point).

To test this hypothesis, the nominal data was presented in a contingency table and was subjected to Chi-square statistical analysis. Variables of listening, speaking, reading, writing and handwriting were tested individually across three categories of learners and data is presented according to these variables.

4.3 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Findings from the activities conducted with Grade 1 learners at the entry point focusing on listening, speaking, reading, writing and handwriting are presented below together with analysis and interpretation.

Table 4.3 Performance of learners in listening and speaking activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Performance</th>
<th>Low Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School based Grade R</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community based Grade R</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Grade R</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = 25.3, \quad df=2, \quad p< .05 \]
$X^2$ of 25.3 exceeds the tabled value at the level of significance which is 0.005 (5.991), therefore the calculated value is greater than the tabled value where $df=2$. This means that we reject $H_0$ and uphold $H_1$. Results are not significant; they are due to chance factors. The results of the study show that there is a relationship between learners’ prior learning and academic achievement in listening and speaking activities.

Of the 12 learners who attended Grade R in school based sites, 9 (75%) displayed high performance in listening and speaking activities and 3 (25%) displayed low and poor performance. This shows that most learners who attended Grade R in school based sites found it easy to connect with others in class during their first days of formal schooling. The researcher then observed on how they cope in class rhymes which was done on a daily basis, especially in the morning and after break. It was discovered that 67% of them displayed high performance, while 33% got low performance and had problems as they sometimes left out some words in the rhymes.

The researcher asked them to count up to ten. 75% of learners from this category were able to count up to 10 or more, 17% counted up to 6, while 8% counted up to 2. It was noted that all of them were unable to count in IsiZulu but could rather count in English. These learners were taught to count in English in Grade R.

Of the 11 learners who graduated from Grade R in community sites, 8(73%) got high performance and 3(27%) got low performance in speaking and listening skills. 55% of them were reserved and did not communicate with peers in class, while a 45% communicated with classmates. In rhymes, 36% presented a high performance, while 64% got low performance. Without them noticing, the researcher followed them during play and break times, 55% were poor in communicating with peers during play and break times, 36% mostly played with classmates, and 9% played with other peers from different classes. 63% were able to count up to 20 and above, 17% counted up to 8
while 20% counted up to 2. They all counted in English, but struggled with counting in isiZulu.

From the 11 learners without any Grade R, 3 (27%) displayed high performance in these activities, while 8(73%) displayed low performance. 36% of learners without any Grade R were able to count up to 10, 45% up to 5 and 19% up to 4. There was a 6 year old boy, referred to in this study as ND, who was able to count up to 20 in English and up to 10 in IsiZulu whereas a number of learners could not count up that far. In rhymes, 9% got high performance and 91% displayed low performance.

27% of the learners were good in communicating with their classmates in class, while 73% had a great challenge in communicating with classmates during their first days of formal schooling. What was interesting was that some learners who were reserved in class played with their peers during play and break times. All the learners of this category were able to name and point to body parts.

**Table 4.4 Performance of learners in reading activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Performance</th>
<th>Low Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School based Grade R</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community based Grade R</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Grade R</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[X^2 = 6.7\] \hspace{1cm} \text{df=2} \hspace{1cm} p>.05
\(X^2\) of 6.7 is below the tabled value at the level of significance which is 0.005 (5.991), therefore the calculated value is lesser than the tabled value where df=2. This means that we uphold the null hypothesis \(H_0\) and reject \(H_1\). Results are significant; they are not due to chance factors. The results of the study show that there is no relationship between learners’ prior learning and academic achievement in reading.

Of 12 learners who attended Grade R in school based sites, 7(58%) displayed high performance in reading activities, while 5(42%) presented poor performance. The researcher gave them books to assess the way in which they turn pages. They were all able to turn them correctly. She also checked their development of book concepts like cover, back, and front. 9% got low performance as they struggled especially with some concepts like the back of the book, while 91% got high performance. When tested on the ability to recognize and read aloud simple numerals like 1 to 10, 84% presented high performance, while 16% presented low performance as some of them were only able to recognize and read up to 5 or less.

55% got high performance in pointing out common objects in pictures, while 45% got low performance and some had no idea on what was needed. When given the work where they had written, 82% could read their own hand writing without being hesitant, while 18% were unable to read their own hand writing. In reading vowels, 73% presented high performance, while 27% displayed low performance. All of them could not read and recognize alphabets in IsiZulu, but most of them could recite them in English.

In assessing holding a book, 82% was able to hold the books right up and correctly turned pages, while 18% needed assistance as they kept on holding the book upside down and were unable to turn the pages correctly.
Of the 11 learners from community sites, 27% displayed high performance and 63% presented low or poor performance with reading activities. 55% presented high performance in recognizing and reading aloud numerals up to 10, while 45% presented low performance. For those who were able to recognize and read numerals, they were able to do that in English and not in their home language, isiZulu. When given their literacy exercise books where they had written, all were able to read their own handwriting. They were given a book with vowels and alphabets to read. 55% presented high performance in reading vowels while 45% got poor performance, but all struggled a lot in reading and recognizing alphabets.

They were all able to turn the book correctly. The researcher also checked their development of book concepts like cover, back and front. 63% displayed high performance, while 27% got low performance in book concepts and some had a problem with the back of a book. When tested on the ability to recognize and read aloud simple numerals like 1 to 10, 45% got a high performance, while a 55% presented a low performance.

All 11 learners who did not attend any Grade R displayed poor performance in reading activities. What was also interesting was that even though they wrote something without any meaning, only 45% were able to read their own handwriting and 55% were unable to recognize their handwriting. All of them could not read vowels and alphabets, but 36% of them knew how to say the vowels correctly.

Holding a book correctly was not a problem for most of them as 73% got high performance while 27% presented low performance. 64% had no problems in turning the book pages, while 36% found it challenging and sometimes doubled the pages. In the development of the book concepts, 55% got high performance and 45% got low performance. This indicates that there are some interesting qualitative aspects of writing
data where children who got a poor quantitative rating for their writing skills demonstrate some capability.

Table 4.5 Performance of learners in writing activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Performance</th>
<th>Low Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School based grade R</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community based Grade R</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Grade R</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[X^2 = 13.41\] \hspace{1cm} \text{df}=2 \hspace{1cm} p<.05

A \[X^2\] of 13.41 exceeds the tabled value at the level of significance which is 0.005 (5.991), therefore the calculated value is greater than the tabled value where df=2. This means that we uphold \(H_1\) and reject \(H_0\). Results are not significant; they are due to chance factors. The results of the study show that there is a relationship between learners' prior learning and academic achievement in writing activities.

Of the 12 learners who graduated from Grade R in school based sites, 8(67%) presented high performance in writing activities, while 4(33%) learners presented low performance. To assess writing, the researcher observed them when writing in class during teaching and learning. Each of them was given to copy known letters in their own names, 75% copied letters of their names correctly, while 25% presented poor performance and copied a few letters wrongly. They had difficulties in writing alphabets as only 8% was able to write a few of them while the rest struggled a lot. When asked them to draw pictures and then convey the message, the greater part of the group which was 84% had challenges, except for 16% who was good in this aspect.
From the 11 learners who attended Grade R at community based sites, 4(36%) of them demonstrated high performance and 7(64%) got low performance in writing activities. 54% was able to write simple numbers up to 10, 27% wrote up to 5, correctly and 19% could not even start writing. Only 9% was able to copy alphabets correctly and the rest copied some alphabets incorrectly. They all struggled in drawing pictures so as to convey messages. 45% presented low performance in copying known letters of own names, while 55% displayed high performance as 28% of them could not copy at all and another 27% struggled in other letters.

All 11(100%) learners without any prior learning displayed low performance in the writing activities.

Table 4.6 Performance of learners` handwriting activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Performance</th>
<th>Low Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School based Grade R</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community based Grade R</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Grade R</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2$=13.41</td>
<td>df=2</td>
<td>p&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A $X^2$ of 13.41 exceeds the tabled value at the level of significance which is 0.005 (5.991), therefore the calculated value is greater than the tabled value where df=2. This means that we uphold $H_1$ and reject $H_0$. Results are not significant; they are due to
chance factors. The results of the study show that there is a relationship between learners' prior learning and academic achievement in handwriting.

Eight (67%) of the learners who attended Grade R in school based sites demonstrated high performance in handwriting skills and 4(33%) demonstrated low performance. It was discovered that 83% was very good in holding a pen or crayons, 17% was poor and needed some guidance on proper holding of a pen. None of them was unable to hold a pen at all. In their workbooks there was a part where they had to trace or connect dotted lines. 92% presented high performance in connecting the dotted lines while 8% got poor performance. This reflects that most of them did not have any problems regarding connecting and tracing dotted lines. Same thing applied in tracing simple picture patterns as 93% of them had no problem. They were given letters, words and patterns to copy: 67% presented high performance while 33% got low performance as 8% was unable to copy at all. The researcher also assessed their development of eye-hand coordination when drawing, 75% was good and 25% was poor. They were also all given A4 papers with pictures and pair of scissors to assess the development of fine motor control in cutting pictures. 75% demonstrated high performance, while 25% presented low performance in cutting the pictures.

From the 11 learners who graduated from Grade R in community sites, 5(45%) of them got high performance and 6(55%) got low performance. It was noted that most of the learners in this category learners were able to hold the pen when they start formal schooling but some had challenges with this. 55% displayed high performance and 45% got low performance in holding a pen. In tracing and connecting dotted lines, 72% managed to connect properly while 19% was not neat and sometimes missed the tracing, while 9% work was totally out.
In tracing simple picture patterns, 27% presented high performance and 73% got poor performance. In assessing the development of fine motor control, they were given pictures to cut using scissors. 27% were developed and the rest needed to be taught about proper handling of the scissors and cutting pictures. Most of these learners were not familiar with using scissors and paint brushes as they said they were not using them in their community based sites.

All 11 learners who did not have any prior learning got poor performance in these activities. See figure 4.1

![Figure 4.1 Summary of findings on the relationship between prior learning and high performance of learners at the entry point](image)

The above graph reflects that learners from school based sites were good in the literacy skills tested as they got an average of 3. This means that these learners started Grade 1
much more developed than their counterparts. Those from community based centres started Grade 1 developed in listening skills as they attained the same average as the ones from school based centres. Regarding reading, writing and handwriting, these learners got an average of 2 which is a satisfactory level. Those who did not attend any Grade R were satisfactory in listening and speaking but poor in reading, writing and handwriting. This shows that families or peers have a positive impact in literacy acquisition of learners as these children commence schooling developed in some literacy skills like listening and speaking. However, these learners were poor in reading and writing.

Generally, the first hypothesis is upheld due to the fact that in four literacy skills conducted with learners, the Chi-square exceeds the tabled value at the level of significance. This therefore means that we uphold the hypothesis that there is a relationship between prior learning and high academic performance. Partially, on one activity on reading, learners with no prior learning struggled with reading.

4.3.1 Performance of learners at the exit point (Grade 3)

When ANA administration was conducted with Grade 3 learners, they wrote an hour long paper which did not assess individual skills such as listening and speaking, reading, writing and handwriting separately. All literacy skills were assessed as a package. For instance, a question in the paper tested the attainment of more than one or two skills. The researcher therefore analysed the total performance of the individual learners in terms of the performance levels 1-7. Comparison of the levels was based on the three categories of prior learning of learners before commencing Grade 1.
Table 4.7 Distribution of learners who wrote ANA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior Learning</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School based Grade R</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community based Grade R</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Grade R</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=154

The above table reflects the total number of Grade 3 learners whose literacy results were analyzed in the sampled schools. Learners were analyzed according to their attainment levels in IsiZulu Home Language in ANA.

The analysis of 2013 Grade 3 ANA results in literacy for the sampled schools, based on their prior leaning before Grade 1, was analysed. The researcher was interested in discovering the gap if any, for these learners in the three categories when they exited the Foundation Phase as they graduated Grade R in 2010 which was marked as a roll out of universal access to Grade R in South African schools. Grade R was formally in the Foundation Phase under the GET band with its specific curriculum guidelines as other grades in the Phase. Most of these learners are presently in Grade 4, except for those who did not progress.

4.3.2 Hypothesis number two

Reiteration of hypothesis number two:
There is a relationship between prior learning (Grade R) and high performance of learners at the exit level (Grade 3).

To test the second hypothesis, the nominal data was subjected to Chi-square analysis once more. At the exit point (Grade 3), ANA does not separate skills. Assessments administered to learners combine all skills such as reading, writing, handwriting, comprehension, fluency etc. Therefore, the results presented below are a combination of all literacy skills.

Table 4.8 Performance of learners who wrote ANA in Grade 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Performance</th>
<th>Low Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Based Grade R</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community based Grade R</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Grade R</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[X^2=37, 31\]  \[df=2\]  \[p>.05\]

A \[X^2\] of 37, 31 does not exceed the calculated value at the level of significance which is 0.005 (5, 991), therefore the calculated value is less than the tabled value where df=2. This means that we uphold \[H_0\] and reject \[H_1\]. Results are not significant; they are not due to chance factors. The results of the study show that there is no relationship between learners’ prior learning and high academic performance at the exit level which is Grade 3, as some learners who never had any prior learning were able to improve during the learning period of the Foundation Phase. See figure 4.2 below.
Figure 4.2 reflects that most learners performed below 50% in 2013 ANA results as 56% was from learners who did not attend any Grade R, 29% from those graduated from Grade R in community sites and 41% from those who graduated from Grade R in school based sites.

FIGURE 4.2 Summary of findings on the relationship between prior learning and performance of learners at exit point
Out of 78 learners from school based centres, 28 got a high performance; 18 learners got an average and 32 learners got low performance. In terms of percentages, it is translated as 36% for high performance, 23% for average and 41% for low performance. There were 41 learners from community based centres. Out of these learners, 18 achieved high performance, 11 got average and 12 achieved low performance. When translated into percentages, 44% was high performance, 27% was average and 29% was low performance. When looking at the 35 learners without any prior learning, 9 learners were at high performance, 6 learners were at average and 20 were at low performance. Their percentages were as follows: 26% was at high performance, 17% was average and 57% was at low performance. It is evident from the above data that learners from community based centres performed better than their counterparts, as 44% of them achieved at high performance compared to 36% of school based centre and 26% of those learners without any Grade R experience.

A number of learners (57%) who did not have any prior learning performed badly and got below 50%, but some of them (6%) were able to get a level 7 which is an outstanding achievement (80-100%) as compared to the 3% of those from school based sites and the 7% from community based sites. This does not mean that attending Grade R did not bear positive results for Grade 1 learners. This is evident from the results of the study as only 5% of the learners got a level1, meaning that they achieved very low literacy skills assessed as compared to the 15% from community sites and 31% from school based sites.

These results reflect that the knowledge gap of some learners shrinks when they exit the Foundation Phase. It was anticipated that the learners from school based sites will perform better than the other categories. However, it was the other way round as those from community based sites performed better than their counter parts; hence 71% of them attained 50% and above as compared to the 60% of learners from school based sites and the 43% of those without Grade R. Most of the learners from community based
sites and those without any prior learning were able to improve in their previous grades and sometimes became more developed in literacy skills than the ones with the Reception Year.

This means that more work has to be done to Grade R at school based sites since these learners have all the resources distributed by the Department of Basic Education and curriculum guidelines as compared to their counterparts. It is unsure whether the gap is with the Grade R practitioners or the curriculum.

4.7 RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

This section presents analyses and interprets findings from the second question of the study. The question is as follows:

*To what extent have learners attained isiZulu Home Language literacy skills by the time they enter Grade 1?*

4.3.2 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In this section a detailed analysis of the activities given to learners will be presented. There will be two activities in each skill assessed for learners who attended Grade R in school based centres, two activities from community based sites and two activities from learners without any prior learning.
4.3.2.1 Listening and Speaking

Activity 1: Learners’ ability to identify, name and match simple shapes and colours

The researcher brought a box full of small puzzles which were in different shapes and colours to class. It was set on the table and each learner was individually called to identify, name and match simple shapes and colours. The researcher assessed them by asking them to identify shapes: square, circle, rectangle and triangle. Therefore, they were supposed to categorize these puzzles according to these different shapes and also identify anything in class or from home that resembles a particular shape.

Table 4.9 Responses of learners who went to Grade R in school based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

58% presented low performance while 42% presented high performance in this activity. For a circle, they mentioned examples of a ball and money. Most of them had a problem in differentiating between a square and a rectangle. In colours, the researcher assessed them in red, white, black, blue, yellow and green and 84% presented high performance, while 36% presented low performance. It was noted that all these learners knew the shapes and colors at their different levels in English, but struggled in their home language which is isiZulu. Only one learner knew yellow in IsiZulu which is `okuphuzi`.
They were taught colours in Grade R, but only in English which is their First Additional Language which is against the policy as isiZulu as a Home Language should be their LOLT in the Foundation Phase. The same thing applied to the shapes. They knew most shapes in English but not in isiZulu, however they all knew that a circle in isiZulu is `indilinga`, although some called it `indingiliza` in isiZulu and 42% mentioned a ball and money as examples of a circle.

**Table 4.10  Responses of learners who went to Grade R in community sites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this category, 82% displayed low performance and 18% high performance in identifying, naming and matching shapes and colours. Some learners only knew the word `circle` in isiZulu but do not know the rest of the simple shapes like the triangle, square and rectangle and 73% of them did not know any of the shapes. The researcher also discovered that they knew the circle from home as they associated it with a ball they play with. None of them knew `yellow` in isiZulu and most of them had difficulty in distinguishing between blue and green, except for red which was identified by all of them. This could be a reflection that shapes and colours were not taught in some community based sites in rural communities.
Table 4.11 Responses of learners who did not go to Grade R

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the learners presented low performance in shapes and colours. A few of them (18%) only knew a circle. All of them knew the colour red, 18% knew green, and none of them knew or identified yellow. It was noted that all the sampled learners in the three categories knew the colour red. To discover why all the sampled learners in the three categories knew the red color, the researcher interviewed them and discovered that it is because when they are playing, they get injured and blood, which is red, comes out of their bodies. Thus they associate red with blood which is why all of them know the red colour.

**ACTIVITY 2: STORY TELLING**

Often the educators read stories to the children when the researcher was present in class. One day the researcher read a story to them about a young girl’s first day at school. This standardized story was chosen for them as each one of them had such experiences and could relate to it even though it was in different situations. The aim was to assess their comprehension skills by asking them questions about the story and also for each one of them to share his or her experience of the first day of schooling, thus
assessing their narrative skills. Planned questions were directed to the story thereafter to them, for example: 1) What is the name of the girl are were talking about in the story? Follow up question: What is your name? 2) What is the name of the school that girl was attending to? Follow up question: What is the name of your school? 3) How many siblings does she have? Follow up question: Do you have siblings? If yes, how many? What are their names? 4) What is your parents ` cell number(s)? See Appendix H.

Table 4.12 Responses of learners who went to Grade R in school based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>66.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this activity, 33.3% presented high performance and 66.7% presented low performance. None of them interrupted when reading a story. It was also observed that all of them listened to the story with enjoyment and without any interruptions. In this category, 33% was able to share their first experiences at school with the entire class. None of them knew any of their parents` cell numbers.
### Table 4.13 Responses of learners who went to Grade R in community based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this activity, learners from community based centres displayed 27% of high performance, while 73% displayed low performance. Those that participated in this category had little confidence when answering to questions. A greater percentage (73%) listened with enjoyment to the story and none of them interrupted when being read to. Only 9% was able to share their first experience to school with the class. It was interesting that only one learner in this category from the sampled learners who knew his parents cell numbers.

### Table 4.14 Responses of learners who did not attend any Grade R

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>18.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>81.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two (18%) learners displayed high percentage while nine (82%) displayed a low percentage in listening to the story with comprehension. Only 36% displayed listening with enjoyment to the story and with no interruptions or divided attention. Only one learner in this category shared his own experience of the first day at school.

4.3.2.2 READING

ACTIVITY 1: Reading of picture books

For this activity, each learner was given the same picture books. They were instructed to open up to a story that s/he likes and then read what s/he saw. What was noteworthy was that most of them chose pictures where people were eating or playing. After that they were instructed to go to a standardized page with a pictures of a family who were celebrating their child’s birthday. Each child was supposed to identify of what was happening in that picture.

Table 4.15 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in school based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>08.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>41.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out of 12 learners, 58.33% displayed high performance in reading pictures and making meaning from them, while 41.67% displayed low performance as they were unable to narrate and give meaning to those pictures.

Table 4.16 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in community based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>72.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of these learners in this category experienced challenges in reading picture books. Of the 11 learners who attended Grade R in community sites, only 27.27% presented high performance, while 72.73% presented low in reading picture books and making meaning from them. Most of them only mentioned the names of the things they saw in the books, for example: “I see a book”, “I see a boy”, “I see a tree”, etc. Thus a greater percentage displayed low performance in reading picture books and making meaning out of reading these picture books. This becomes evident that picture books were not taught in Grade R at community schools. The reason could be that they did not have these books as they are independent and are not supplied by the government as it is with those in school based sites.
Table 4.17 Responses of learners without Grade R

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This activity was a great challenge to those learners without any Grade R. They were paging and looking at the different pictures in the book, but drastically failed to read and make meaning from these pictures.

**ACTIVITY 2: Recognizing own name**

In this activity, the researcher wrote their names on A4 papers and mixed them up. Each one of them was asked to choose the paper with his or her name on it.

Table 4.18 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in school based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>58.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From them, 16.67% were poor in recognizing their names while 83.33% was not hesitant to pick up the paper with their names on.

Table 4.19 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in community based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>18.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>54.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In picking up their names written on the A4 papers, 72.73% displayed high performance while 27.27% displayed low performance in recognizing their own names.

Table 4.20 Responses of learners who did not attend any Grade R

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the learners in this category failed to recognize their own names written on the A4 papers.

4.3.2.3 WRITING

ACTIVITY 1: Ability to write own names

Each learner was instructed to write his/her name on the A4 papers provided to them.

Table 4.21 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in school based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>41.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

58.3% got high performance in writing their names and surnames with correct spacing and legible handwriting while 41.67% got low performance. However, some wrote their names with minor mistakes, especially those with long Zulu names, and only 2 of them were unable to write their names at all. Unfortunately the writings of learners who wrote their names correctly cannot be displayed as this will be compromising confidentiality and anonymity of the participants as per research ethics.
**Figure 4.3** reflects the writing of a learner who wrote his name incorrectly. Only the first letter was correct.

**Table 4.22 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in community based sites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>18.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>54.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a difference in their ability to write names with their counterparts as a greater percentage of 72.73 got high performance with a legible handwriting, while 27.27% got low performance when writing their names as 2 of them could not write their own names at all.
In Figure 4.4, the learner wrote some letters of the alphabets correctly, but none of them forms part of her own name.

**Table 4.23 Responses of learners who did not attend Grade R**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of them got low performance in this activity and were unable to write their names during the time of study.

**ACTIVITY 2:** Vowels were written on the chalkboard where learners were to copy and write these vowels in the A4 paper provided.
Table 4.24 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in school based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>41.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The writing of vowels was not a challenge to most of the learners as 92% got high performance in writing ‘a e i o u’, and 8% got low performance as some wrote ‘a’ and ‘e’ upside down.

Figure 4.5 Writing of the learner who wrote the vowels correctly.
Figure 4.6 Vowels were correctly written.

Figure 4.7 Writing of a learner who was able to write only ‘a’ repeatedly.

Figure 4.8 ‘e’ and ‘u’ are written upside down but ‘o’ and ‘i’ are correctly written, even though they are overlapping within the lines.
Table 4.25 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in community based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>36.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>45.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>18.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the 11 learners from community based centres, 82% displayed high performance and 18% displayed low performance in the writing of vowels. Those with low performance failed to copy `a, e, u`.

Figure 4.9 Writing of the learner who wrote the vowels correctly.
**Figure 4.10** Writing of the learner who wrote the vowels correctly.

![Figure 4.10](image)

**Figure 4.11** The learner was hesitant and stopped after writing `i` and thereafter wrote, dots, but continued after a while to write `o` and `u`. She also wrote in the wrong direction.

![Figure 4.11](image)

**Figure 4.12** a learner wrote `a` upside down in three attempts but also included alphabets in writing vowels.

![Figure 4.12](image)
Figure 4.13 the learner wrote `a, i and o` correctly but not in its order, and `e` and `u` were upside down. This learner wrote very softly on the paper which is why her writing appears faint.

Table 4.26 Responses of learners without any Grade R

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the learners without prior learning failed to copy the vowels written on the chalkboard.

Figures 4.14, 4.15 and 4.16 is the work of learners who tried to copy some of the vowels regardless of being written upside down as the rest of the learners could not copy at all.
**Figure 4.14** only wrote `i` and `o` correctly

**Figure 4.15** vowels `a` and `e` were written upside down and this learner wrote the same thing all over the page.

**Figure 4.16** only `o` was correctly copied but failed to correctly copy the other vowels.
ACTIVITY 2: Writing simple numerals like 1 to 10

Table 4.27 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in school based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The learners were instructed to write simple numbers from 1 to 10 and 75% presented high performance and wrote them correctly without any assistance or copying, while 25% displayed low performance where some wrote up to 4, others wrote 6 and 7 upside down, or 10 written as 01.

![Image showing written numerals](image.png)

**Figure 4.17** depicts the writing of a learner who wrote these numerals correctly without any assistance.
In Figures 4.18 and 4.19 the number 10 was written 01.

Figure 4.18 number 10 was written 01.

Figure 4.19 number 9 and 10 were incorrectly written.

Table 4.28 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in community based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>09.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>54.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>36.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
64% who displayed high performance was able to write simple numbers up to 10, 36% displayed low performance where 9% was able to write up to 5 correctly, and 27% could not even start writing.

**Figure 4.20** The learner wrote the numerals correctly and in the right direction.

**Figure 4.21** The learner had challenges in writing most numerals except for 1 and 3 which were written correctly even though he did not follow the numerical order.
Table 4.29 Responses of learners who did not attend Grade R

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of them presented low performance as they could not write any of the simple numbers. These activities prove that learners without any prior learning come to school undeveloped in most writing skills.

Figure 4.22 represents the work of the best learner as he was able to copy 1 and 4 in this category. The rest of the learners were unable to copy any of the numerals.

4.3.2.4 HANDWRITING

ACTIVITY 1: Using variety writing materials like paintbrushes, wax crayons or pencils
Table 4.30 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in school based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this activity, they were given pictures to paint and colour using a variety writing material like paintbrushes, wax crayons or pencils. They were given pictures to paint and color, 83% presented high performance having neatly painted, and 17% presented low performance but some colourings went out of the boundaries of the pictures.

Table 4.31 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in community based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this category, 45% displayed high performance and 55% displayed low performance in the use of the different writing materials and sometimes coloured outside the boundaries of the pictures. The reason for this could be that most Grade R classes in community centres did not have teaching and learning resources, so these learners are not used to the different writing materials.

**Table 4.32 Responses of learners who did not attend Grade R**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learners of this category got low performance in using different writing utensils. They had problems in using paintbrushes when painting.

**ACTIVITY 2: Using the correct starting point and direction when copying patterns, words and letters**

Learners were given A4 paper where they were supposed to copy patterns, words and letters that was written on the chalk board. The analysis was not on the correct copying, but on the on the correct starting point and direction when writing and with legible handwriting.
Table 4.33 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in school based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>41.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

58% got high performance and 42% got low performance in copying patterns, words and letters as some of them started in the middle of the page and wrote downwards. When doing the above activities, the researcher noticed that 75% used the correct sitting position, while 25% bent their faces closely towards their desks when drawing.

Figure 4.23 represents work of a learner with legible handwritings who were able to write these sounds correctly on her mother tongue using the correct starting point.
Figure 4.24 the learner was incorrectly holding her pencil which led her to writing softly on the paper, but was able to write correctly.

Table 4.34 Responses of learners who attended Grade R in community based sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>45.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>54.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this activity, 45% of learners presented high performance while 55% got low performance. This category had challenges of writing starting at the correct starting point as most of them were failing to start at the correct margin of the exercise book. When assessing their handwriting skills, 45% used the correct sitting position while 55% bent their faces closely towards their desks when drawing. This shows that in most community based centres, learners were not taught the correct sitting position.
Figures 4.25, 4.26 and 4.27 display work of learners with legible handwriting in this category.

In Figure 4.25 the learner wrote the sounds correctly in the first line, but missed out `l` in writing `lu` and with a correct starting position.

Figure 4.26 is the work of a learner who has written the vowel `a` legibly, but did not write the sounds that were written by his classmates.
Figure 4.27 the learner wrote clearly with a correct writing direction and correctly written words in IsiZulu.

Table 4.35 Responses of learners who did not attend Grade R

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learners without prior learning got low performance in this activity as some of them did not even attempt to copy. For those who copied, they were writing meaningless things with incorrect starting point and sitting positions in the figures below.
In Figure 4.28 the learner was able to write only these dots.

Figure 4.29 is a meaningless writing of a learner within the category of those who did not have prior learning.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The discussion of results will be based on the findings of question 1 and question 2 of the study. Related literature from the conceptual framework and theoretical framework that support or do not support the research questions will be reviewed. The first question seeks to find out if there is a relationship between learners` attendance of Grade R and their performance in isiZulu at entry and exit points.

This study discovered that there is a relationship of prior learning in learners` academic performance in IsiZulu in Grade 1. All learners came to school developed in listening and speaking, but at different levels. Most learners who attended Grade R in school
based sites commence schooling developed in most of the listening and speaking skills. The greatest challenge in most learners regarding these skills was in expressing themselves regarding their own experiences.

Those from community based centres came developed in these skills, but lesser than their counter part as they had challenges of self-confidence and in expressing themselves in class. The reason could be that they are not used to bigger numbers in classes as in community based centres they are normally few in numbers. It was sometimes difficult to assess their comprehension skills as they were reserved in the first two to three weeks of data collection and thereafter most of them improve and speak out freely.

The speaking and listening skills development of learners in both categories indicates the positive impact of prior learning in these learners. This is supported by the findings of Campbell et al. 1998 in their correlational follow-up study on the effects of early childhood and preschool interventions that prior learning is the most powerful predictor of academic performance. This study supports the findings of Barnett and Hustedt (2003) that Grade R exposure has a powerful and long-lasting experience as its literacy learning displays a positive effect on classroom performance in higher grades.

Learners without prior learning start Grade 1 developed in some skills in listening and speaking, for example they were all able to name and point on their body parts. This shows that families, communities and peers have played a very significant role in developing the children`s listening and speaking skills. This is in line with the constructivists' view that children construct knowledge through their interactions within their environment (Mooney, 2000). Vygostsky, a popular constructivist, is of the idea that knowledge is constructed within a social context, and he also believed that the home environment has a great impact on children`s literacy development. This is also
supported by the findings of the study conducted by Speaker et al. (2004) that children attain literacy skills though their interaction with others in a social context. Zygouris-Coe (2001) also supports the idea that literacy development starts early in life in the social world before the child enters school. Piaget’s theory supports the findings of this study as he discovered that children’s interaction with the environment is very essential for their cognitive development and that children learn about themselves and the environment around them through play. During the activities the learners’ greatest challenge was in narrating and displaying comprehension to a story. Some did not even show enjoyment when a story was read to them which could be the result of them not being used to story reading or story telling at homes. However this category was the least developed in these skills.

Prior learning regarding reading indicates that learners start Grade 1 developed in some reading skills. Learners from school based sites were the most developed followed by those from community sites and those learners without prior learning were the least developed. This does not mean that all the learners in the latter category commence schooling without being developed in all the reading skills, as some of them were developed in skills like holding the book right side up and correctly turning the pages.

None of the sampled learners had parents who read stories to them at home. Some said that there are no books at home except for the textbooks or exercise books for their siblings. Even newspapers where there will be sale items or cartoons are not bought to their homes that normally arouse interests of reading to young children. Reading picture books was a challenge to all the categories of the sampled learners. The reason could be that these learners were not exposed to being read stories or picture books at homes and in schools than those who attended the Reception Year. This is supported by the findings of a study conducted by Stanovish and Siegel (1994) that children that are at risk for later reading problems are those that have weaker emergent reading skills. Strickland (1989) in his study discovered that children from families where storybooks
are read have a great advantage than those whom storybooks are not read to. This is also supported by the findings of Snow et al. (1998) that homes who provide their young children with less chance of acquiring knowledge and skills regarding books and reading are at risk of reading challenges than their counter parts whose homes have a rich literacy environment. The researcher was stunned to discover that learners who attended Grade R from school based sites failed to interpret and read pictures, as according to CAPS these learners should have attained picture reading and making meaning from them in their Reception Year. This shows that there is a gap in assisting learners in reading picture books in Grade R.

Most learners from school based centres commence schooling developed in writing skills, followed by the ones from community based centres and those without prior learning performed badly. Those with prior learning showed enjoyment when given writing materials and even started writing without being told what to write. This was the worst literacy skill for those without any Grade R as they needed major assistance. The challenge for all of them in the latter category was that they were not used to the different types of writing materials at homes. The only writing material that most homes had was a pen. This is therefore disadvantaging them from being developed in writing skills. In homes with a rich literacy environment, writing instruments are used as part of their toys which forms part of their oral and written language activity. This is supported by the findings of Pellegrini and Van Ryzin (2007) when they determined that children `s level of pretend knowledge envisaged their emergent writing skills.

In this study it was discovered that there are some interesting qualitative aspects of writing data in learners` understanding and uses of writing as a social practice. Some of the learners who got a `poor` quantitative rating for their writing skills were nevertheless demonstrating some capabilities like writing using the correct sitting position or writing using a correct starting point even though the writings are meaningless.

Same thing applied to the handwriting skills; those from school based sites are more developed than their counterparts, followed by those from community sites and the ones
without prior learning are lacking in this skill. Non-availability of playing material and writing tools at homes might lead to the delays in the development of fine motor controls like using a pair of scissors, small muscles skills through finger play or the eye-hand coordination. CAPS stipulate that learners should have been developed in these skills by the time they start Grade 1.

These results are also supported by the findings in the study conducted by Pascal and Bertram (2009) that children who are most likely to have challenges are those that start school with less prior knowledge and skills in areas like oral language, writing, background knowledge, alphabet knowledge and print awareness. This affirms the findings by Scaborough (2001) who discovered that children with strong listening and speaking skills often have powerful reading and writing skills. Evangelou et al. (2009) discovered that most studies on Home Learning Environment are of the idea that homes which provide early learning activities to their children predict learners’ academic performance in schools. The results of this study indicate that learners with Grade R commence Grade 1 developed in most literacy skills than those without prior learning. These results are supported by the findings of Barnett and Hustedt (2003) showing that Grade R exposure gives a powerful and long-lasting experience as its literacy learning has positive results for future academic performance. It was also noted that some learners with prior learning were very creative and innovative in that they tended to do correct things that their educators had not introduced in the way they were doing it. For instance, in introducing new rhymes they start imitating and use their body language and facial expression in displaying what was meant by the rhyme. This is displaying that they have reached what Vygotsky (1978) termed the Zone of Proximal Development. Thus, the results of this study indicate that there is a relationship between prior knowledge and academic performance in IsiZulu at entry points due to the exposure of a Grade R class.

None of the children of the sampled learners have parents with post matric qualification. Most of the parents were primary and high school dropouts and some of them,
especially the mothers, are still in high schools. The sampled learners came from poor families with a low socio-economic status relying on the government grants for living. Zill and West’s (2001) findings showed that children with mothers who have less than a high school education, living in a family that receives food stamps or who rely on cash welfare payment and living in a single-parent household are more likely to be negatively affected in their academic performance. Hart and Risley (1995) researched the role played by verbal interactions in homes evolves around all the literacy skills. In their conclusion, they discovered that poor and uneducated families offer less language experiences than middle class families.

We have discovered disappointing results with regards to ANA at the exit points. Even though there are learners who did not attend a Grade R class, the results show that at the exit level learners catch up. The hypothesis that states that there is a relationship between prior learning and high performance is rejected and the null hypothesis is upheld. It is significant that majority of learners` performance was from moderate achievement upwards, including those without Grade R. The results show that some learners without prior learning improve in their learning and maintain the level of those with prior learning at the exit points. This supports Gallimore and Tharp (1990) in their model as they discovered that an educator gives instructions to the learner on how to execute the task. The learner then becomes self regulated and self directed, but not yet a perfectionist in executing that task as assistance might be needed. The learner’s performance then becomes developed, automatized and fossilized as knowledge is fixed and happens without thinking and cannot be forgotten at all. Learners without prior learning at the exit points have reached the de-automatisation of performance stage as they were able to use their previous experience from other grades through the ZPD and managed to be on the same par or above those with prior knowledge when they commence Grade 1.
The study by Pascal and Bertram (2009) does not support the findings of this study at exit points. They contend that children who are likely to have challenges are those that start school with less prior knowledge and skills in areas like oral language, writing, background knowledge, alphabet knowledge and print awareness. The researcher therefore disputes their findings as some learners with less prior learning will struggle at the beginning of their learning, but will be able to improve after getting assistance from an educator or any expect in the lower grades. On the other hand the researcher agrees with Pascal and Bertram (2009) findings when considering that a greater percentage of learners without prior learning got low performance in ANA at the exit points as compared to their counter parts which reflect a positive output in ANA results.

The second question seeks to establish the extent to which learners have attained IsiZulu Home language literacy skills when they enter Grade 1. The results of the findings indicate that there is a gap in literacy attainment levels at entry points in the different categories assessed. Learners from school based sites commence Grade 1 having attained more literacy skills than their counter parts followed by those from community sites and then lastly those without any Grade R exposure. The first category was able to communicate with classmates and peers in class and during break times. A greater percentage was able to name and match simple shapes and colours in English than in isiZulu. This displays that some educators in Grade R are not using IsiZulu in teaching their learners as most of them fail to name the simple colours and shapes in their mother language but succeeded in English. They found it easy to cope with simple rhymes and newly introduced rhymes by the educator. They displayed an attitude that they are familiar with rhymes in their Reception Year. I discovered that most of these learners were good in rhymes got high performance in most listening and speaking skills and also in phonics. These findings are supported by the studies conducted by Walton (1995) and Bryant et al. (1990) that early exposure of learners to rhymes plays a vital role in phonological awareness development. During teaching and learning, they participate in discussions and asking questions and most of them were able to listen and recall simple number sequences in order. During story reading times, most of these
learners listened and displayed enjoyment to the story and with comprehension. They were able to listen and not interrupt the speaker. What was remarkable was that their level of development was not the same as some were more developed than others which was also a sign that the quality level of the different Grade R classes studied are not on the same par.

Most of these learners have attained a level in reading skills when they start Grade 1. They were able to read the vowels correctly, read their own handwritings, recognize own names, hold the book and turn pages correctly, developed in book concepts, recognize and read most alphabets, recognize and read aloud most alphabets and recognize and point out common pictures. This is supported by Justice and Kaderavek (2004) when they mentioned that emergent literacy skills that are acquired in preschool years present a solid foundation for learners` subsequent transitions to early reading towards the achievement of conventional skilled reading. The researcher maintains the idea by Gough and Walsh (1991) that those children that have mastered the ability to look at printed letters and combination of letters and also pronounce their corresponding phonemes in ECD classes are more likely to become skilled readers.

This category commences Grade 1 with most of them having attained a number of writing skills. For instance, most of them were able to write from left to right using the correct starting point and direction, writing own names, copying known letters in own names, writing and copying of simple numerals like 1 to 10, writing of vowels, writing and copying alphabets and writing using the correct sitting positions. It is stated in CAPS that learners should have attained these skills in their Reception Year. Pascal and Bertram (2009) supported the idea that ECD learning should focus on writing attempts, using known letters and/or approximations of letters in representing language and writing from left to right.
These learners also started Grade 1 developed in most handwriting skills. Such learners were able to cut out pictures using scissors, form letters using finger painting with correct starting point and direction, correctly holding the writing instrument, developed in drawing and painting, developed in small muscle skills through finger play and using a wide range of writing material. This is supported by Clark (2010) when she mentioned that individuals must master early skills in fine motor, visual motor, understanding of phonological awareness, alphabet principle and phonemic awareness.

Some learners from community based sites start Grade 1 developed in some literacy skills but below in most of those from school based sites. Such learners were very shy in the beginning of the first weeks of school opening which led to challenges in gauging their speaking and listening skills. Some of them rarely put up their hands for answering questions. They needed more attention because when developing a more one-on-one relationship with them and having discussions with them through questions, they can speak, just that their self esteem is low in the beginning of the year. It was discovered that after three weeks these learners in class and started to open up with classmates and during breaks. It was also noted that these learners were not used in story reading in their Reception Year. The reason for this could be that these community sites are independently ran without any support from the Department of Basic Education. Such centres might not have funds to buy books that will support their teaching and learning. However these learners did not interrupt the speaker during story reading and speaking.

They started Grade 1 below the ones from school based sites, however, some of them have achieved reading skills like reading own names and handwriting, reading vowels, recognizing and reading aloud simple numerals like 1 to 10. Some were developed in correctly holding the book and turning of pages, but struggled in book concepts like title, front or back.
Some of these learners start Grade 1 were able to write their names and surnames correctly and also able to copy known letters in own names. Some were able to write and copy simple numerals like 1 to 10. Writing from left to right was not a great challenge in those that were able to write and they used the correct starting position and direction. They displayed challenges in drawing pictures that convey messages. Writing of vowels was not a great problem to most of them, but some had challenges in writing `e` or `u`. Some of these learners started Grade 1 able to write some words like `idada`, `umama` or `ubaba` which is Grade 1 work. There were those learners who were very poor in this skill, such that they were just like the ones without prior learning.

These learners were not the same in level of attainment in the handwriting skills. Some start schooling with legible handwriting and writing from left to right. They were not used to the using the variety of writing materials like paintbrushes and finger paintings as it was not used in their centres. A greater percentage of them used a wrong sitting position when writing. It was also noted that learners in this category were not used to using a rubber to erase or make corrections. In such cases, they used their finger to get the saliva in their mouth to erase, such that most of them have some torn pages in their exercise books.

The attainment levels of learners without prior learning in literacy skills are very low as compared to their counterparts as these learners were fresh from homes and their only learning was acquired from adults and peers at homes and communities, unlike the other categories who attained some skills through their Grade R classes. These results are supported by the findings of Hart and Risley (1995) when they discovered that poor and uneducated families offer less language experiences in that they decrease the amount of verbal interactions functions which lead their children to be at risk of developing less literacy skills. Some of them were very reserved and even cry when an educator talked to them. They were scared to ask to visit the toilets such that they urinated while sitting in their desks. A few of them in this category tried to cope in
listening and speaking skills. Reading was a challenge to all of them. Same thing happened when assessing their writing skills. They wrote meaningless writings and start anywhere in the page. What was noted was that some of them were able to recognize their meaningless writings from other writings, but most of them could not start writing at all. Handwriting was also a challenge. They needed major assistance in holding a pen and other writing utensils. They commenced Grade 1 not developed in eye-hand coordination and fine motor skills. The Grade 1 educator has to develop them in these skills as according to CAPS these skills should have been developed by the time they start Grade 1. This therefore delays the Grade 1 educators as the literacy attainment levels of these learners in their classes are not the same, but they have to use the same curriculum and taught concurrently. This brings challenges to educators on how to improve their teaching programs to learners of different attainment levels due to their prior learning, as currently there is nothing in the curriculum covering that issue.

It is clear from the findings that young children are more developed in speaking and listening than in their reading and writing skills. These findings are similar to those that were discovered by Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) who affirm that the listening and speaking abilities of young children are more developed than their reading and writing abilities and that those children can easily develop their vocabulary through listening to stories that are read to them.

Thus, according to these findings, the roll out of Grade R in some rural schools is a formality that it is part of the Foundation Phase. The compulsory part of it is not effective as some learners start formal schooling at the age that allows them to be in Grade 1 and such schools simply put them in Grade 1 without passing through Grade R as per departmental policy. One of the reasons for not placing learners in the Reception Year could be that of the long distances (more than 5km) to be travelled by learners from homes to schools. Thus some parents prefer to keep their children at home until they feel they are grown enough to face the travelling to schools. In such cases, if a learner
who first comes to school at the age of seven or more, for instance, that learner is put in Grade 1 not in Grade R due to his/her age.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS ONE AND TWO

- Grade R has to be made compulsory in South African schools regardless of the learners` age as per admission policy for Grade 1. This means that even if the learner starts schooling at the age of 9, which sometimes occur in rural areas, s/he must be placed in Grade R. Thus, no learner must be given a concession not to do Grade R due to age.

- For those learners who are still in deep rural areas where there is no learner transport provided, the Department of Basic Education must open satellite centres that will operate under the control and management of a specific school where it will function under specific guidelines stipulated in the CAPS documents. Such satellite centres must have specialized practitioners who are called or attend any workshops concerning Grade R.

- Presently, Grade 1 educators need urgent and appropriate training in teaching these learners from the three categories as they are in one class with no specific guidelines to be followed for the grade, whilst their learners are not on par in literacy attainment.

- Support in the form of relevant training and provision of resources has to be given by the government to community sites as in rural places, like the ones where this study was conducted, primary schools are far away from homes and parents prefer such centres due the age of their children and distance to be travelled to schools.
➢ More professional development in Grade R programmes is needed for Grade R educators as most of them do not follow the prescribed guidelines, e.g. teaching in English as their First Additional Language but not in IsiZulu Home Language as stipulated by Foundation Phase policy.

➢ Compulsory intervention programmes with stipulated guidelines must be introduced to parents in their children’s early ages for developing literacy skills at home. Parents are primary educators and they are with their children from birth and can play an important role in the development of early literacy skills.

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter presented interpreted, analysed and discussed data for the first and second question of the study. It also presented the recommendations that emerged from the findings. The following chapter will present findings based on the last two research questions of the study.
CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION OF QUALITATIVE DATA: EDUCATORS’ PERSPECTIVES ON LEARNERS’ LITERACY ATTAINMENT LEVELS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four presented quantitative data, together with analysis, discussions and recommendations based on the findings. This chapter presents data related to the last two research questions of the study (that is: questions three and four).

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

Reiteration of question three:

*How do educators identify learners’ actual development level in literacy isiZulu?*

Two educators from two schools who have a diverse combination of learners in Grade 1 as per the three categories (learners who attended to Grade R based in schools, learners who attended Grade R based in community sites, as well as learners who did not go to the Grade R class) were interviewed. One-to-one interviews were conducted.
5.3 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

During the analysis of data, themes emerged and revealed strategies educators use to establish learners zone of proximity. Themes that emerged from the study were: diverse points of departure; learners` confidence in self-expression; exposure to diverse educational contexts; academic performance of learners in Grade 1; Grade 1 learners` level of motor skills development; Grade 1 learners` ability to fit into a social context; academic performance of learners in Grade 1; the effect of prior learning and socio-economic background of the learner. These are the focal areas in which teachers focus on when assessing learners` literacy attainment levels. Their direct responses will be provided under each theme.

**Diverse points of departure**

When conducting baseline assessment, educators had differing views. They focus on different skills and abilities. One educator was interested in seeing if learners were able to write, while the other one focused on the listening and speaking skills. In listening and speaking skills, the educator looks at whether the learner is able to listen and respond to simple questions or not. For instance, asking them personal information like: “Uwubani igama lakho?(What is your name?)” or “Uhlala nobani ekhaya? (Who are you staying with at home?)” Some of the learners will answer appropriately and others will respond in different levels. This is evident in the responses provided by the Grade 1 educators who want to assess their learners` literacy attainment levels when they enter Grade 1.

This is what they said:
Respondent A

“I give them the same activity to be done by them. For example they have to write the vowel `a`. This is when I will identify those who will be able to write it or not and thereafter group them according to their abilities.”

Respondent B

“I have to start with listening and speaking competencies because it will assist in evaluating whether the learner can listen and comprehend or not.”

Respondent A

“I focus on the listening and speaking first for the learners to get used to me as their educator and to the classmates and also the entire school environment. Thereafter I move on to reading, writing and handwriting.”

Respondent B

“In reading I check if the child is able to read any of the vowels.”
**Respondent A**

“As I have said earlier I believe in focusing to the listening and speaking skills. If the child has mastered these skills, it becomes easy for her/him to grasp the other skills.”

**Respondent B**

“Ey……. before we start anything I have to start by looking at the listening and speaking skills then the rest will follow. If a learner is able to listen then s/he will therefore be able to take instructions from us, for example, teaching them some rhymes.”

The excerpts above indicate that educators apply different strategies when conducting baseline assessments in order to establish the learners’ zone of proximal development. Some focus on the reading and writing skills and some focus on the listening and speaking skills. The focus on reading and writing is to see if learners have mastered the phonics so that educators know where to start, while the focus on writing was to see if they can get a good grip of the pen and be able to write certain letters. Although it is known that learners are from diverse educational backgrounds, it is evident from the data that baseline assessment that is applied to all three categories of learners is the same. The one-size-fits-all approach is used. Learners are not separated into groups. This is evident from the educators’ responses. None of them mention that they check the learners’ educational background before they expose them to reading, writing activities which are the skills that rely extensively on prior learning compared to listening and speaking.
Learners` confidence in self-expression

Both educators interviewed had concerns about how learners present (behave) themselves in class. It is evident that learners lack confidence when they enter Grade 1, especially those that attended Grade R in community based centres and those without prior learning. This is what educators observed in their baseline about the confidence of learners.

Respondent A

“What I normally do to identify learners` baseline is that I introduce myself that I am Ms X and I am going to be your educator. I thereafter ask them to introduce themselves. Some of them will simply cry and say nothing, but with others it does not become a challenge and they simply introduce themselves. Then I group them according to their capabilities. That is where I start.”

Respondent B

“They even cry when we give them instructions and they are shy and scared even to ask to go to the toilets such that they urinate for themselves and sometimes urinate in class.”

Respondent A

“….but it is very difficult to establish these competencies in learners who are shy to talk in the first days, especially those who have never been in any formal schooling.”
Grade 1 educators have the challenge of receiving learners who are still not able to express themselves. This could be because they are in a new environment for the first time or they are shy to do what the educators ask them to do. Educators explain that learners who often cry during the first days are those who have not been in a Grade R class. It is evident from the data that educators are delayed in doing their activities because they still have to acquaint new learners with the new environment. Hence this delay affects learners who have been to school prior to Grade 1 who are ready to learn.

**Exposure to diverse educational contexts**

Some educators focus their attention on finding out where the learners are coming from, what their educational background is like. They start by establishing who the learners in front of them are. That is when they discover that in their classes they have children who obtained their initial education in other sites other than from the schools. From that knowledge they move on to learn about the differences they have so that this knowledge can help them know the level at which they have to pitch their lessons. The findings reveal that educators face difficulty when teaching learners who have never been to Grade R. These learners struggle to cope with learning and their social skills are underdeveloped. Educators have to start by introducing or developing things that should have been developed in Grade R which delays their work to teach what is expected in Grade 1. It is important to know the educational context of learners as it has an impact on learners` development as it gives educators a platform of how to plan their lesson for learners with this diversity.

**Respondent A**

“It is a very difficult job to deal with learners from these three categories in establishing their baseline assessment. You see….. most of the learners from
community sites are afraid to speak at first because they are not used to be in large numbers in a class.

Respondent B

“It is not easy to teach learners of these three categories on the same class. Unfortunately we cannot group each category and put it in the same class, so that you know that you are teaching learners of the same type. I really think that this will help. I wish all learners in my class could have graduated from a Grade R class and all in the school based centres as some community centres are doing nothing at all. But such learners from community sites are better than those without prior learning because they are familiar of having an adult or expect in front of them who is teaching even though it is in a low level according to my observation. ”

Skills to assist educators to deal with multi-level classes as reality calls for should be put in place. This is the cause for concern for educators, since they both mention that they get delayed with trying to put learners on par before they continue with their teaching. This is clear that this process happens at the detriment of learners who are Grade 1 ready.

The educational context in Grade 3 is not taken into consideration. Findings of this study reveal that there is no difference in the learners from the three categories in isiZulu at the exit point. At this stage the educational context of these learners has no impact in their learning such that it is unnoticed by educators. Grade 3 educators are labeled as `respondent 1, 2, 3 or 4.` This is how they responded:
**Respondent 1**

“I don’t consider whether the child is from a particular category at this class. I simply teach the learners that have been progressed to or retained in this grade.”

**Respondent 2**

“At this stage we do not look at the category the child is coming from. I think that is important in a Grade 1 class, not this one. We are interested in teaching these learners in their new grade.”

**Respondent 3**

“Knowing the educational background especially Grade R attendance won’t assist me at this stage as learners as there is no difference at this stage.”

**Respondent 4**

“I am aware that we have such categories in our school but they are meaningless in this grade such that I cannot tell which learner is coming from which category. Their literacy levels cannot be determined by their educational background.”
Grade 1 learners’ level of motor skills development

Findings of this study reveal that most learners start Grade 1 with poor writing skills. Some of these learners have delayed literacy development as a result of different factors of which prior learning is one of them, as those without any Grade R are the worst. This is caused by the fact that some learners are not yet developed in fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination which should have been developed in Grade R. Those from community sites are mostly not taught the correct ways when writing, like holding the pens correctly and minding the sitting positions, such that Grade 1 educators have to start teaching and developing these skills to/in such learners. This is therefore delaying what has to be taught in Grade 1. CAPS talks about developing fine motor skills. It is obvious that Grade 1 educators assume that all learners in this grade have developed these skills as when they first meet them they give them pens to write with. This is how the educators responded.

**Respondent A**

“I think writing skills are more challenging in the five skills assessed. Some of their bodies are not readily balanced in that we have to drill finger play to develop small muscles which is a Grade R work in order for them to write.”

**Respondent A**

“In writing I first assess if the child is able to hold the pen correctly besides assessing what s/he has written. I am guided by what is stipulated to what should have achieved in Grade R.”
Most learners start Grade 1 with superficial writing skills. Most of the challenges in writing stems from underdeveloped motor skills of children. This suggests that there should be more drill work that will assist in the development of such skills.

**Grade 1 learners’ ability to fit in a social context**

Learners who are ready display the skill of being able to work with their peers in a group context. This is where they display their literacy skills by responding to instructions from the teacher, questions posed by their peers, and also listen to and reiterate what their peers are saying. Educators assess learners’ readiness to be in Grade 1 by exposing them to a group context. Learners have to rely on their listening skills, thus, listening to the educator’s instruction. This also gives them time to socialize with peers in groups. This is how one educator does her baseline assessment:

**Respondent A**

“It depends on the skill I want to assess. Learners sit in groups according to their level of development but when instruction is given to a particular group, the other groups also listen. I do that such that even those who are below baseline know what is said or done by those who are above their level so that it will be easier sometimes to master that activity if it is their turn as they heard the instructions given to their classmates.”

This strategy helps learners to learn from their counterparts while the educator is assessing their abilities to speak. Learners who are ready feel at ease when this
kind of assessment is administered by the educator to them. This is where they get
the platform to display their skills. For example, skills they have acquired from their
prior learning which could be a Grade R exposure or the educational background
they get from home or from other children through play.

**Academic performance of learners in Grade 1**

By giving learners different activities, educators want to establish their readiness in
literacy through academic performance. They explain the skills they focus on in the
process of determining the learners’ readiness. Academic performance is highly
determined by the school readiness of individual learners in Grade 1. This demands
that learners should start Grade 1 developed in listening and speaking skills, reading
skills, writing and hand writing skills as stipulated in CAPS regarding to what has to
be developed in Grade R learners. This is how the educators responded:

**Respondent A**

“Those with Grade R are good with listening skills as they easily take instructions
while those without R have a problem in taking instructions. Learners from
community based centres are better in writing than those from school based centres
as they go straight to words writing which is the work to be done in Grade 1, hence
they had difficulties in integrating syllables, sounds and letters into a meaningful
whole, e. g u- m-a-m-a into umama. Some learners are copying other letters or
vowels upside down.”
Respondent B

“Most of the learners start Grade 1 developed in speaking and listening skills but varied in levels of attainment. But most learners are struggling a lot with reading and writing. This can be caused by the fact that their motor skills were not developed such that there is no integration in these skills. Some can read but cannot write.”

Respondent A

“Learners from community based sites lose confidence and they are also shy such that they start talking later in class after some weeks or months maybe. It is even difficult for them to communicate with others at the beginning of the year.”

Respondent B

“The speaking and listening skills for learners from community sites are developed but they are shy for the first three weeks because they are not used to big numbers in a class and this makes it difficult to assess these skills. In all the categories, some learners are struggling in writing or copying ‘a’, ‘e’, and ‘u’ as they write them upside down. In speaking, those without Grade R are afraid to speak and used to bite their fingers when making conversations with them.”

The findings reveal that the academic performance in Grade 1 is dependent on the learners’ prior learning. The literacy of children in counting in their mother tongue isiZulu is narrow as the data indicates. Most of the struggling learners are those from
Grade R which is based on the communities and those who have no background at all. There are disparities that are caused by the learners’ exposure to Grade R which causes drawbacks on the educator who receives them in Grade 1.

It was difficult for Grade 3 educators to know if Grade R exposure has a positive influence on literacy attainment at exit points as they do not know the learners who have attended any Grade R class and those without Grade R attendance in their classes. The major reason could be that in this grade educators do not have interest in knowing the Grade R status of learners in their classes. They feel it is in a Grade 1 educator’s interest to identify these learners at the beginning of the year as it will assist them to plan their lessons in a diverse prior learning exposure. One educator said:

“There is nothing in this grade that shows that learners have attended Grade R or not. Maybe it is effective in a Grade 1 class but not in this grade. Academic performance varies to individual learners.”

The effect of prior learning

Prior learning in Grade 1 learners can take different forms. It could be learning Grade R from a formal institution which is a school context, a community site, or learning from home where parents are able to provide such services in an informal context. This study reveals that prior learning has an impact in Grade 1. It assists the learner to easily catch up with his/her learning if it was fully developed as per requirements of Grade R.
Respondent A

“I strongly believe that they are caused by the previous learning experience because you can tell from the first encounter that this learner has prior learning or not and also from which community centre as they are not the same.”

Respondent B

“They are caused by the family background and/or exposure to Grade R experience. If the Grade R educator is lazy and not doing her work properly, her learners will come to Grade 1 knowing nothing.”

Some children come from families where they can be assisted to grow academically and that enhances the academic performance of the learner when they enter Grade 1 without Grade R exposure. Some of these learners perform at the same level as those who have been exposed to a Grade R class.

The findings reveal that Grade 3 educators do not consider prior learning as having a positive impact in literacy development in Grade 3, such that they are not aware whether learners in their respective classes had prior learning or not. They believe that it all depends on the child’s abilities of coping in his/her previous and present grades. This is how they responded:
Respondent 1

“I don’t know which learners had prior learning. You see in this grade there is no difference between the learners who got their Grade R in school based centre or in community based centres and those who did not go through any Grade R. They are just the same here. It depends on the individual learner.”

Respondent 2

“I cannot tell which learners had prior learning and which ones don’t have. In order for me to know I have to go to the admission book and check whether the learner had prior learning or not. For those that we know their prior learning status, I cannot point my finger at a particular category that learners from it are better than their counter parts as they perform differently depending on each learner’s competence not the category.”

Respondent 3

“In class learners are the same such that one cannot predict the ones who have attended any Grade R. If I need that information, I have to ask them.”

Respondent 4

“It is impossible for me to know learners with prior learning in this Grade. I just teach learners who qualifies to be in this grade with no concern for other matters.”
The responses of these educators reflects that they do not consider prior learning as having an positive effect in a Grade 3 class such that they are not aware whether learners in their respective classes had prior learning or not. They believe that it all depends on the child’s abilities of copying in his/her previous and present grades.

**Socio-economic background of the learner**

The findings of this research reveal that the socio-economic background contributes to the learners’ readiness for Grade 1 in terms of literacy. Socio-economic background could be the families’ financial state, educational level and the ability to afford gadgets that can stimulate children’s literacy development. Educators’ responses:

**Respondent A**

“Yes, this is done in our first encounter as we ask them the people or parents they are staying with. As our school is in a rural area, we know most of the families’ backgrounds where our children are coming from. Most of them are from poor home backgrounds where the family members are illiterate and relying on the government’s grant for living. Most of them live with their father’s family and mothers live at their own parents’ homes. The connection between the two families is poor. The child finds him/herself neglected by both families. Such children become bullies, thieves, lying and avoid learning situations at all times.”
Respondent B

“Yes. The community around the school is poor and learners are mostly staying with grandparents. They are mostly dependent on the government’s grants. Most of the learners that are above the baseline have elderly siblings that are in higher grades and are assisting these learners in Grade 1 or they have young mothers who are schooling in secondary schools.”

Some children listen to radio programmes that air children’s educational activities. Even though these learners do not go to school, they have a chance of learning through the radio. Others watch TV even though the context is very rural in nature, but others are privileged to have a TV set and watch the educational programmes. Some children who do not have such privileges and also stay with grandparents fall behind in terms of literacy development as the data indicates. Data also indicates that learners who stay with young mothers who are of school age do well in Grade 1 and display the readiness abilities to be in a Grade 1 class.

5.4 RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR

Reiteration of question four:

*Which approaches are espoused in the teaching of learners who are at different levels of development in IsiZulu literacy?*
5.5 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Given the fact that learners are from diverse academic backgrounds, the researcher was interested in knowing the approaches teachers think are the best for such learners. The aim was to know how teachers deal with diverse learners after establishing their zone of proximal development. The following themes emerged from the study: whole class and small grouping teaching; lack of proper training; learners` performance at the beginning of the first term; learners` pace in doing class activities; shrinking or widening of the gap caused by exposure or lack of exposure to Grade R; challenges in the teaching of some literacy skills, and supporting learners who are at risk of repeating the grade due to superficial prior learning.

**Whole class and small grouping teaching**

In the responses provided by educators, it became evident that teachers favour the grouping method. They believe that it helps to support learners who entered school without proper prior knowledge which enables them to cope with Grade 1 work. The study reveals that in order to deal with learners` differences, they are put in groups according to their abilities. This will enable the educators to cater for learners according to their needs. This is what the respondents said:

*Respondent A*

“After identifying the gap, I group them according to what they know. These groups are not permanent as learners keep on changing them provided they have mastered that particular skill.”
Respondent B

“I put them in small groups according to their capabilities. I keep changing these groups now and again. If a learner is catching up I put him/ her in another group of learning with the same literacy abilities by that time.”

Respondent A

“When introducing an activity, I don’t introduce it to a particular group but to the entire class. You have also noticed that they are overcrowded in class. Those that are above are given more challenging work for them not to be bored. “

Respondent B

“I normally introduce a new activity to them. I thereafter gave them exercises to write or do which are relevant or on the level of the newly introduced activity. Learners will therefore do the activity according to their individual levels. Thus, I used the informal individual assessments.”

In the teaching of learners who differ in literacy attainment levels, educators support the grouping method which they feel works better in uplifting the standard of those learners who are lagging behind. Both respondents use small groups where each group has a diverse number of learners in terms of literacy development levels. In each group, educators ensure that there is a learner who obtained Grade R from a school setting, a learner who obtained Grade R from a satellite site, as well as those learners who do not

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have any Grade R experience. This is done as per the skill the educator wants to hone in learners. Once the skill is mastered, the groups are changed and learners are swapped. It is evident that educators do not have a variety of teaching skills to choose from. They mostly use either whole class teaching or small group teaching.

**Lack of proper training**

When exploring the approaches, educators used to teach learners who are in different levels in literacy isiZulu attainment when it became apparent that they do not have necessary skills to teach these learners. Although educators favour grouping of learners, they also mentioned that they have challenges since this method does not yield good results at all times. Educators were of the idea that they lack proper training in dealing with multi-level learners. They are not sure of which methods to apply in a multi-level class, thus they use the trial and error method. Their responses are:

**Respondent A**

“You know it is very challenging at the beginning year to deal with these learners. No one has trained me on how to teach them as they have different levels of learning. I was just given a Grade 1 syllabus to cover which is of the idea that these learners have achieved up to a certain level in literacy attainment in Grade R, of which, that is not the case. I use my own experience and discretion. Those from community sites have less confidence so I have to build it up first, thereafter they will cope. Those who are fresh from homes, I have to start up everything but some catch up easily which is sometimes influenced by home background, like having siblings in higher grades who are teaching the learner at home.”
Respondent B

“There are a lot of difficulties as those without Grade R have to be developed in almost all the literacy skills. Some have to be trained on how the hold a pen correctly. I have to assist the community based learners to overcome the shyness they possess in the beginning of the year. All these things are consuming a lot of teaching and learning time.”

Respondent A

“It is very difficult to teach in a multi-level class. But there is nothing I can do in this issue. It is just for me to support and teach the learners. Mine is to be able to distinguish their literacy levels.”

Respondent B

“I am trying to cope but it is not easy at all. It also demands a specific skill in dealing with a multi-level class of which I am relying much on my experience. Grouping them is the only solution for me.”

When educators receive their Grade 1 learners at the beginning of the year, they are of the idea that learners are on par. They assume that they would have covered all the literacy skills as set out in the curriculum document (CAPS). They are ready to start off focusing on Grade 1 curriculum. When they receive learners who have no Grade R experience that becomes challenge to them as they have to go back to Grade R work
and take these learners through that curriculum. To the educators this is time consuming and delays those who are ready for Grade 1 work. The problem is caused by the fact that they cannot apply the differentiation method in teaching these learners.

**Learners` performance at the beginning of the first term**

When educators receive learners during the first week, the focus is on revision so as to establish their capabilities and to find out how firm their knowledge is regarding literacy. Using different activities (storytelling, interpreting pictures, reciting phonics, spelling, reading, giving instructions, exposing them to different play activities) they test their learners' readiness. Educators state that it is during this time where they discover that most learners from school based centres are better than their counterparts. Some of those from some community based sites are better in writing, even from those learners who attended Grade R in school based sites. Learners` performance at this stage largely depends on what has been developed by Grade R educators and families or peers at home. Very little has been done by the Grade 1 educator at this stage.

**Respondent A**

“At the beginning of the year learners from school based centres are better than the other groups except for those with exceptional cases, for instance, if the child has learning difficulties or the Grade R educator failed to do her job. Most learners from community sites come to school poor in reading, but some of these learners can write more than the other categories and with eligible handwritings.”
Respondent B

“The school based learners are better than the ones from community based centres. Learners from community based sites have problems with reading and middle line crossing. Their listening and speaking skills are developed in most of them just that they are shy at first. Some can write more than those from school based centres as they start Grade 1 being able to write consonants and some words which makes my work to be easier.”

Even though activities done at the beginning of the year in Grade 1 are almost the revision of work done in Grade R, educators maintain that learners’ performance when they enter Grade 1 is poor. It becomes a challenge for them to proceed with the Grade 1 curriculum when learners display their weakness. This means that they have to redo Grade R curriculum which thus delays them from moving on. This negatively impacts on the work that should be covered for the set year (Grade 1) as some of them fail to cover the syllabus.

Learners` pace in doing class activities

In general, educators apply the approaches that will dictate the speed of learners in performing tasks. They give them activities similar to the ones listed above. In their responses, educators were concerned about the pace of learners who enter Grade 1. They state that the pace of the learners is too slow. However, there are some learners who finish their tasks within the stipulated time. Most of those learners are those who have Grade R background from school based sites, however one educator stated that they do get some learners from these sites who are on an equal footing with other learners from school based Grade R. Educators fail to keep up with the learners` pace
since their pace varies according to individual learner which is mostly influenced by their prior learning.

**Respondent A**

“Their pace is not the same. It depends on a particular learner. Some can pitch up earlier and easily.”

**Respondent B**

“Most of the learners from community and school based centres easily catch up. But it varies from learner to learner. Those without prior learning have a slow pace as I start them from nowhere.”

This means that learners with no background need more time to complete their activities. This call for educators to apply differentiation approaches as some of the learners still have to learn how to grip a pen because of their lack of Grade R education.

**Shrinking or widening of the gap caused by exposure or lack of exposure to Grade R**

It is evident in the findings that learners come with gaps caused by their exposure or lack of exposure to academic learning, that is, Grade R. It is also mentioned by educators that the gaps shrinks as times goes on.
**Respondent A**

“The gap shrinks after three weeks from the community based learners and at the second term from those without prior learning.”

**Respondent B**

“Some of these learners without Grade R catch up in the second or third term such that some of them beat those with Grade R. Those with Grade R from community sites pitch up after a month or two and some of them become more than those from Grade R in school based sites.”

**Respondent A**

“Some of the learners who have never been in Grade R class beat those who have attended Grade R at the end of the year as some of them catch up in the second term. It takes about three weeks for community based to close the gap between them and those who attended in school based sites. But that depends on the community sites as some of them are doing nothing; children come to us as if they are fresh from homes. We know such centres, unfortunately we cannot approach them as they are privately managed.”

Educators state that at the entry point in Grade 1 the gap shrinks as early as the second and third term. The gap shrinks earlier to those who have been to Grade R but in community sites. Those learners who come from the background where there is
academic stimulation also do not take long to catch up with their counterparts. Other responses from Grade 1 educators:

**Respondent A**

“You know by the end of the year some of these learners without Grade R beat those who started Grade 1 with prior learning. Same thing applies to the ones from community sites. It really depends on the individual child.”

**Respondent B**

“It may be difficult for you to believe this but come towards the end year for the same group that you have assessed, there will be no differences in most of these learners from the different categories. It varies according to learners.”

Grade R exposure does not have that alarming impact on the progression of learners. It was expected that these learners with Grade R from school based centres will excel in their Grade 1 learning as they have started in Grade R with predetermined curriculum guidelines as stipulated by CAPS where Grade 1 will be a continuation of the outcomes achieved in Grade R.

This is also evident in the responses given by Grade 3 educators. By the end of Grade 3 it is hard, in most cases, to differentiate learners according their prior learning at the exit level. It was difficult for educators to know if Grade R exposure has a positive influence on literacy attainment at exit points as they don’t know the learners who have attended
any Grade R class and those without Grade R attendance in their classes. The study reveals that there is a shrinking of the gap in literacy knowledge regarding the learners from the categories concerned, such that it is difficult for the educators to differentiate these learners in Grade 3. Educators felt that learners attain literacy skills as they progress with their grades. Responses by the Grade 3 educators:

**Respondent 1**

“When they continue with grades the gap shrinks as there is no way you can say learners from a certain category are weak or strong. It really depends on an individual learner.”

**Respondent 2**

“As I have said earlier, learners are the same when coming to this grade. It only depends on the learner’s capabilities. One cannot tell which learner is from what category regarding literacy attainment.”

**Respondent 3**

“There is nothing in this grade that shows that learners have attended Grade R or not. May be it is effective in a Grade One class but not in this grade. Academic performance varies to individual learners.”
Respondent 4

“It is impossible for me to know whether a learner has attended Grade R or not. They are just the same in this grade as one cannot see the gap. It depends on each learner.”

At the exit level (Grade 3), one cannot easily see that there are learners that did not go to Grade R. It is unfortunate that there are learners who do not manage to catch up during the first year until the end of the year which means they have to repeat the grade. The gap lingers on, but by the time they reach Grade 3, some learners do well, so well that they excel more than those who had been to Grade R.

The results of the study reveal that Grade 3 educators are of the idea that there is no relationship between prior knowledge and academic performance in literacy attainment in isiZulu at exit points. The major reason is that in this grade educators don’t have interest to know the Grade R status of learners in their classes. They feel it is a Grade One educator’s interest to identify this learners at the beginning of the year as it will assist them to plan their lesson in a diverse prior learning exposure.

Challenges in the teaching of some literacy skills

Educators maintain that they have the challenge in teaching some literacy skills; they find this very demanding as the group of children they receive come with very limited knowledge. Teaching reading and writing is very demanding to Grade 1 learners. This demands that the learner should have developed the basic skills like the development of motor skills in writing or holding a book right side up which is Grade R work. Educators’ responses:
Respondent A

“I think writing is a difficult skill among the five skills because there are those learners who can read but cannot write. For example, a learner can read `lala` but when writing, s/he write `alla` or `ulolo` but the learner write `uoo`.

Respondent B

“Reading for me is a challenge for learners. Remember when a learner cannot read, it is sometimes impossible for that learner to write.”

Respondent A

“Learners without prior learning are struggling in all the literacy skills. We start afresh in everything and this is delaying us because we are expected to finish a Grade 1 syllabus at the end of the year. Those from community based sites are struggling a lot with reading. But reading is also a challenge to those from school based sites.”

Respondent B

“Those learners without Grade R got challenged mostly in reading, writing and handwriting. Even in listening and speaking they are the least in these categories.”

Reading includes the interpretation of pictures for Grade R learners. So educators receive learners who in Grade 1 cannot look at the picture and talk about they see. This
is caused by the lack of exposure to other children; as a result they cannot speak in class about what they see in the picture. Some learners would not have mastered the phonics correctly in their Grade R learning, and when they reach Grade 1 they confuse sounds. Educators find it difficult to handle such diverse learners and hence lack the method that is appropriate to the learners' literacy level, particularly reading and writing. Educators maintain that even those learners with Grade R from school based sites struggle with reading and writing in Grade 1.

Supporting learners who are at risk of repeating the grade due to superficial prior learning

Learners are supported in a group and then individually according to their needs. Grouping them assists educators to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the learners and then provide relevant assistance and support to them.

Respondent A

“They sit in groups according to their literacy needs. Some of them easily pitch up but others struggled. Those that are experiencing challenges are given a level one assistance (assisted in class with the entire group), if they fail I adopt level two assistance (individual assistance) but if all the levels fail, I move on to level three where the child is referred to a specialist for assistance.”

Respondent B

“This is very difficult when you are teaching Grade 1 for the first time and you come across with such categories. It is much better if you are experienced like me… because
you know what to do and how to deal with such learners in the first place. You need a skill to recognize and assist them. Then I group them according to their needs for it to be easy for me to focus in a group with the same problem. If some of them do not pitch up in a group, assist them individually.”

The findings of this study reveal that educators use different approaches in teaching literacy to multi-level learners. Grouping learners according to their different levels of literacy attainment is very imperative in meeting their literacy needs.

5.6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the findings it is evident that every child starts Grade 1 being developed in some literacy skills like listening and speaking which was developed by community and family members at home. Baseline assessment for Grade 1 is grounded in Grade R fourth term competences in all the five literacy skills for the educators to establish the learner’s knowledge at the beginning of the year with little or no assistance from the educator. These are the very same competences that were used in establishing the learners’ knowledge that they already possess when they start Grade 1.

The results of this study reflect that learners without any Grade R are the ones who struggle more than the other groups in all the literacy skills. This concurs with the findings of the study conducted by Pascal and Bertram (2009) as it reveals that children who are likely to have challenges with literacy learning are the ones who started school with less prior knowledge and skills in areas like oral language, writing, background knowledge, alphabet letter knowledge, phonological and print awareness.
These findings reflect that educators approach baseline assessment in different ways. In establishing the learners` ZPD, the educators have to take into account the individual needs of the learners in order to provide relevant instruction and fully engage learners in literacy development. This demands that educators have to adjust their lessons in order to efficiently support them in their literacy learning. It is crucial to note that the learners` learning is very momentous when they learn within their ZPD and they move to the new independent learning level when they have internalized that learning. In listening and speaking, the educator should ascertain the vocabulary that learners understand and correctly use as this will assist the educators in labeling the learners` knowledge and experiences. To assess these skills, the researcher read to them a story written by her which was about a little girl`s first day at school. This story is in Appendix H. The researcher also wanted to assess their comprehension skills. The learners were thereafter expected to share their own experiences about their first days to school. Some of the learners were able to answer some questions by getting assistance with leading questions. This is supported by the Ministry of Education in Ontaria (2003) when they contend that the breadth and the depth of the child`s vocabulary present a solid foundation for decoding and comprehension skills. Sahin et al. (2013), affirm that school readiness does not focus only on the development of cognitive and literacy skills, but on all the developmental areas and various skills of learners. Snow et al. (1998) support the idea when they mention that children must enter Grade 1 having an attitude toward and knowledge about literacy that will enable them to succeed.

Educators approached reading differently as one of them supplied learners with text that they could not read independently, but they did read it after getting a little support from the educator. The other one gave them picture books to make meaning out of them. The researcher gave them literacy books and put them in awkward positions in their desks. She told them to start reading by opening the books starting from the front cover page. Some struggled at first, but were able to cope after guidance was given to them.
Educators start at different points when establishing the learners` zone in writing. In most cases, writing and handwriting were assessed concurrently. Educators gave learners pencils and paper to copy the vowels that they wrote on the board. In this case they were assessing the way learners held their pens, their sitting position, writing from left to right; fine motor skills development, ability to copy, eye-hand co-ordination and development of small muscles skills. They assisted learners who needed development in some of the skills, but overall learners were able to perform such tasks independently. The researcher also asked them to write their names in the paper provided. Some were able to write their names but not their surnames and others struggled in this. The researcher pasted cards on top of their desks with their names and surnames in front of each individual learner and told them that it is the way their surnames are written. She then told them to copy it and later they were able to write them without any assistance from the researcher or copying from the cards. The research findings of this study concurs with the conclusions of Molfese, et al. (2006) in their study of preschool learners in name writing skills that learners had higher scores in name writing than in writing dictated letters or copying letters, as most of those who graduated from a Grade R class were able to write their names in the beginning of their Grade 1 class.

Educators prefer to start assessing the listening and speaking skills. The researcher felt it is correct as these skills are taken as core skills in the development of literacy to children as research has shown that most learners start Grade 1 developed in listening and speaking skills than any other skill. Evangelou et al. (2009) stated that the knowledge of their own language in vocabulary and grammar is developed by the range of conversations by adults and peers at homes and communities as the ongoing verbal give–and-take proffer opportunities for listening and speaking and the child gets an immediate feedback. Thus, most learners start Grade 1 developed in most listening and speaking skills as it has been developed by family members and peers. Vygotsky, the constructivist, believes that the social interaction and instruction have a positive impact in the child`s learning and development.
The findings of this study are supported by Burch (2007) who affirms that instruction that scaffolds learners` present knowledge is of great benefit to learners who learn to read and write as it allows them to acquire and learn to manipulate new literacy skills in a risk-free social context which allows them to move to the next level of literacy development. It is therefore crucial for educators to take into consideration the relationship between the learners` linguistic abilities and the tasks they are expected to learn (Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). It is also imperative for educators to orally give out clear and explicit instructions to young learners in literacy development. This will make it easier for educators to establish the zone of the learners.

Educators used a number of teaching and learning strategies to establish what the child already knew Joubert et al. (2008) stated that teaching and learning strategies must include games and any fun activities, workstations and learning corners, a thematic approach and grouping strategies. All of the sampled educators mostly preferred the grouping strategies in their classes, but sometimes used them in conjunction with the other strategies. This method was also used by Burch (2007) in her study on examining the impact of scaffolding young children`s acquisition of literacy in primary grades when she grouped learners according to their different reading levels.

The researcher noticed that there are a number of challenges most of these learners had in the beginning of the year when starting Grade 1. Some had a problem with the eye-hand co-ordination such that they fail when they had to write what they see and wrote it incorrectly or upside down. Some of them needed development in fine motors co-ordination as they had challenges in holding a pen when writing, such that their hands shook when they had to write or when handling a pair of scissors in order to cut correctly or challenges in any task demanding the finger skills like drawing, picking up small objects or fastening shoe laces and buttons. Others experienced challenges with the middle line crossing, for instance, they cannot take something that is on their left hand side with their right hand. Such children only wrote one side of the page and failed
to write on both sides of the pages, thus skipping the next page or writing on only half of the page. They also held their books at a particular angle when reading.

Some of them had a problem with visual perceptions like visual discrimination and visual foreground and background distinction. In visual discrimination they start Grade 1 failing to see and differentiate the similarities and differences in letters, numbers or words. For example: differentiating between  `n` and  `u`,  `b` and  `d` or  `n` and  `m`. In visual foreground and background distinction, they fail to focus on the relevant object against a confusing background and such learners were noticeable by having problems when copying from the chalkboard and in reading when they omitted words or skipped lines and also lost the place at which they were reading (De Jager , 2006).

It has been noted that educators seem to know most of the families of the children they are teaching. The communications with the parents assist when the learner when the learner experience challenges. From the findings it is evident that some learners from different community based centres start Grade 1 being able to write some words which is the work to be done in the following grade. Grade 1 educators seem to find pleasure in this practice as they felt that made their work easier as these learners already know Grade 1 work. This shows that Grade R practitioners from community based centres are not following what is stipulated in the CAPS document on what has to be taught in Grade R. However, this depends on the educator as some learners from community based centres start Grade 1 knowing nothing at all.

A lot has to be done to Grade R in school based centres as the gap between them shrinks from the third week of school reopening. These learners should be performing well as they have passed through the desired outcomes from Grade R class. It is evident in the educators` responses that the socio-economic background has an impact on the child`s literacy skills. Research reveals that children from low socio-economic
backgrounds are likely to be less developed in literacy skills than those coming from middle class families with rich literacy environments (Flouri & Bucharian, 2004, Noble, Norman, & Farah 2006). Adedokun (2013) recommended that young children must be exposed to literacy activities that are effective in the improvement and development of literacy skills in their early years of life. The findings of this study support the notion of socio-economic background impacting either positively or negatively on the learners` academic performance in isiZulu literacy.

### 5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Grade 1 educators have to get workshops regarding the identification of `Zone of Proximal Development` and strategies thereof in teaching in a multi-level classroom.

- There must be intervention programs to be given to any parent with a child who has not yet started Grade R which will assist them in helping their children in literacy development before they start schooling.

- Partnership with the families and the communities has to be promoted with its focal point on literacy or language and learning. They have to be equipped with strategies and approaches on how to develop early literacy to the children.

- Grade 1 educators have to be trained on how to identify learners with problems in each literacy skills and thereafter provide remedial assistance to the child.
5.8 SUMMARY

This chapter provided a presentation of qualitative data on educators` perspectives on learners` literacy attainment levels. Data for questions three and four was presented, analyzed and interpreted. The following chapter will deal with the summary, recommendations for further study and conclusion.
CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented data related to questions three and four. This chapter gives the summary, recommendations, suggestions for further study and conclusion of this study.

6.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The distance between the researcher’s place of residence and the sampled schools was a challenge as she was expected to travel two hours or more to the school. This demanded the researcher to leave home in early hours of the day in order to start the day with the learners in class. As both the sampled schools were in rural areas, it was difficult to reach them during rainy days and this compelled the researcher to use a four wheel drive car as the roads were muddy and slippery in these long distances which in turn had financial implications on travelling costs.

The other challenge that the researcher encountered was during the signing of the consent forms by parents. Some of them were concerned that if they allow their children to be part of the research study, the researcher may have access to personal or private information relating to the health of their children like checking their HIV or TB status.
But that was clarified to all of them that the study was for educational matters only and even the names of the sampled learners will under no circumstances be disclosed in this study that is why they were given pseudo names.

Another challenge was that the learners were not free to the researcher at the beginning of data gathering which gradually varnished as time went on. The same thing applied to the educators, as the researcher made it clear to them that they were to regard her as a student not a departmental official and had to teach as if the researcher was not there in order to get the true reflection of the results, which they ended up doing. Two of the educators denied access to be recorded and stated that they were no comfortable about that and the researcher manually took the notes during the interviews.

6.3 SUMMARY

This study’s main aim is in exploring the Foundation Phase learners’ attainment levels in isiZulu Home Language as the result of exposure to Grade R. This study reveals that in some rural areas Grade R is both in community based centres and also in school based centres. The community based centres are operating independently and do not follow the curriculum guidelines stipulated in CAPS. It also discovers that in such areas there are learners who start Grade 1 without any exposure to the Reception Year despite the roll out plan of the universal access to Grade R in 2010. The literacy attainment level of these learners in Grade 1 during the beginning of the year is not the same. Educators have to use their experience or expertise through baseline assessments on how to tweak their lessons as there is no formal guide on how to teach such learners with diverse literacy attainment levels at entry points. This study reveals that Grade R exposure has a positive impact on literacy attainment levels of learners in Grade 1 as learners with Grade R were better developed in literacy than those without any Grade R.
The first objective of the study was to discover the nature of the relationship between prior learning and academic performance in isiZulu in Grade 1 (entry point) and Grade 3 (exit point) as the result of Grade R exposure. The study ascertains that there is a relationship between prior learning and academic performance at entry points as learners with Grade R exposure were developed in the literacy skills assessed, but varied in the activities given to each learner. Learners that displayed the greatest challenge were the ones without any prior learning in all the skills assessed. This is supported by the findings of conducted by Pascal and Bartram (2010) who contend that learners who are likely to have challenges with literacy learning are those who commence school with less prior knowledge and skills in areas like oral language, writing, background knowledge, alphabet letter knowledge, phonological and print awareness.

This gap seems to vanish at exit points as it was discovered that some of the learners without Grade R exposure performed better than those who started Grade 1 having graduated from the Reception class. This study disputes the findings of a longitudinal study by Campbell et al. (1998) on the long-term effects of early childhood and preschool interventions for low income families. They discovered that the most powerful predictor of academic performance was the previous academic performance and prior learning. It also disputes Barnett and Hustedt (2003) in their affirmation that Grade R exposure gives a powerful and long-lasting experience as its literacy learning has a positive effect in classroom performance on higher grades. It depends on the individual learner and the quality of educators s/he was exposed to in the previous grades. On the other hand, there can be a correlation in the findings by the current study and the ones by Campbell et al. (1998) and Barnett and Hustedt (2003) in that most of the learners with prior learning were the least in numbers of those with low performance as compared to those without any Grade R exposure.
The second objective of this study was intended to establish the extent to which learners have attained isiZulu Home Language literacy skills by the time they enter Grade 1. There is synergy of these findings by different researchers like Naude et al. (2003) when they discovered that learners who have attended early childhood classes experience a series of receptive and expressive language involving poetry, storytelling and creative dramatics. Such activities develop learners` literacy development before any formal learning commences. Research has shown that learners with prior learning have been exposed to phonological instruction or printed materials in their classes which gives them an advantage to read faster and become skilled readers (Segers & Verhoeven, 2004, Lonigan, 2006, Snow et al., 1998, Riley, 1996, Honing, 1996, Gough & Walsh, 1991, Wilson, 2007, Snow, 2004).

The study further ascertains that most learners with prior learning start Grade 1 developed in writing skills than their counter parts that do not have any Grade R exposure. The development levels vary from learner to learner. Most of them start Grade 1 able to write from left to right, write own names, copy known letters in own name, write or copy vowels, simple numerals and alphabets. These findings are in line with those discovered by Teale and Sulzby (1996), Pascal and Bertram (2009), Clark (2010) and Molfese et al. (2006) when they concluded that learners with prior learning are familiar with written language as those who experimented with writing in their early stages understand how print works.

The researcher has discovered that most learners with Grade R were developed in handwriting skills. These learners were developed in fine motor controls, small muscles skills and eye-hand coordination. They were able to trace simple outlines of pictures, patterns and letters in own name where the correct starting point and direction arrows are included on all letters. They were developed in using a range of writing tools like paintbrushes and wax crayons, except for those attended their Grade R in community sites and also in copying patterns, words and letters using the correct starting point and direction when forming letters. Some experienced challenges in placing letters on the
baseline. There is a synergy of these findings regarding handwriting with those discovered by Clark (2010) when she maintains that learners must be able to compose and to handwrite by mastering early skills in fine motor like holding and manipulating a pencil with smooth coordination; visual motor in copying shapes, letters, or symbols; and understanding phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, and phonemic awareness.

The third objective was to ascertain how teachers identify learners’ Zone of Proximal Development. Lui (2003) stressed that educators must be capable of identifying and using the strength and the weaknesses of each individual learner in her/ his learning both in a group or individual form. This study reveals that educators identify the ZPD in different ways in the activities assessed. Thus, they have diverse points of departure. This is supported by Smith (2012) in his study on his understanding of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development from the socio-cultural theory and the ways in which educators can pair the understandings to become better educators believed that there are many pre-assessment strategies that the educators can use in diagnosing the learner’s current ability. In this study, educators place emphasis on learners’ confidence, educational context, motor skills, ability to fit in the social context, academic performance, prior learning and socio-economic background when they want to identify their ZPD.

The last objective was on determining the espoused approaches to the teaching of literacy in multi-level classrooms. It was discovered that educators prefer to group learners according to their abilities in such classrooms. This is supported by CALPRO and ERIC studies on teaching and managing the multilevel classes as mentioned that the use of grouping approaches was discovered as a valuable management tool in any multi-level setting. This demands that the educators have to first administer the needs assessment so as to categorise learners according to their strengths and weaknesses. A number of themes emerged from the responses of educators regarding teaching in multi-level classes which include: lack of proper training; educators’ views on learners’ performance; learners’ pace; shrinking of the gap; impact on progression of learners;
whole class teaching; demanding skills; prior learning, and supporting learners who are at risk.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Grade R has to be a compulsory class in all South African schools regardless of the learners’ age when commencing schooling. This means that even if the learner starts schooling at the age of 9, which sometimes occur in some rural areas, s/he must be placed in Grade R and not Grade 1. This will assist the Grade 1 educators in knowing how to tweak their lessons from the first schooling day as the learners will be on the same par regarding literacy attainment, except for those learners with learning differences. It will also be easy for them to follow what is stipulated in the CAPS document as it identifies what has to be taught in each term which builds up on what the learners have learned in Grade R.

In deep rural areas where there is no provision of learner transport by the department, the Department of Basic Education must open satellite centres that will operate under the control and management of a certain public primary school where it will function under the guidelines stipulated in the CAPS documents. Such satellite centres must get full benefits like those given to Grade R in schools’ sites. They must have qualified practitioners for teaching in a Reception class who will teach according to the Grade R curriculum stated in CAPS. Such practitioners have to attend developmental workshops conducted by the Department.

In rural areas where there are learners from diverse backgrounds regarding prior learning before commencing Grade 1, there is a great need for developmental training or workshops for educators on how to teach these learners in one class with specific
guidelines to be followed for the grade as the learners are not on par in literacy attainment.

Grade R practitioners need more professional development in running Grade R programmes as some of them do not follow the prescribed teaching guidelines like using English as the medium of teaching and learning in some activities rather using IsiZulu Home Language as stipulated by Foundation Phase policy. Close supervision and support is needed to practitioners in order to ensure that policy is implemented in the Reception class. It is also recommended that the Grade R curriculum be revisited as it did not reflect positive results on learners at the exit point such that some of those who started Grade 1 without the Reception class performed better that those who graduated for Grade R. Even the Grade 1 educators stated that the gap starts to shrink in Grade 1 such that there is less or no difference at the end of the year between a learner who went to Grade R and the one who did not go through any Grade R.

Grade 1 educators have to get workshops regarding the identification of `Zone of Proximal Development` and in assisting learners to learn independently to a higher degree. They must be equipped with strategies of teaching in a multi-level classroom which will enable them to identify learners with problems in each literacy skill and thereafter provide an appropriate remedial assistance to the learners.

There must be compulsory intervention programmes with stipulated guidelines to be implemented by parents to their children`s early ages for developing literacy skills at home. Parents are primary educators and they are with their children from birth and can play a crucial role in the development of early literacy skills. These programmes need trained practitioners that will monitor and support parents with young children. This demands the promotion of partnership with families and communities with its focus on
literacy and learning. They have to be equipped with strategies and approaches on how to develop early literacy in their children.

6.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This research study gives light on whether Grade R is making any contributions to the improvement of Grade 1 literacy competencies, especially in rural schools. Further study could extend the current research questions in a number of ways which may include parents as participants. The involvement of parents will assist in getting the first-hand information about what they do regarding literacy development for their children at home. The findings of this study present that there is a great need for intervention programmes for parents with children at their early stages of development.

Future studies in rural areas concentrating on the functioning of the Reception class and the attainment levels of Grade 1 learners with diverse literacy levels could assist the policy makers to develop curriculum coverage that covers circumstances where there are these learners in the same class. They will also come out with a firm decision on dealing with learners who commence school above the age requirement. Subject advisors will know how and when to give support to Grade R and Grade 1 educators. Findings of this study have displayed that there is a need for intervention programmes for Grade 1 learners with diverse literacy attainment levels or prior learning.

Future studies regarding the effects of Grade R after its roll out plan of the universal access in 2010 could also be conducted. These studies will reflect if there are still places that do not implement Grade R as a compulsory grade in their schools. For those schools that are currently implementing it, this will be a guide on whether Grade R has
an impact of giving positive results in literacy competencies at exit points, especially in the improvement of ANA results.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided the summary, recommendations and suggestions for further study. The aim and the objectives of the study were reviewed and verified that the study answered the research questions. Suggestions for future study were also included. Furthermore, literature was also reviewed together with the findings of the current study to check if there is synergy.

In conclusion, the study reveals that in the sampled schools, Grade 1 is constituted by learners who graduated from Grade R in school based centres and community based centres together with those without any Grade R at all. The current research has shown that these learners start Grade 1 with different literacy attainment levels. It depends on the individual educator on how to plan his/her lessons that will accommodate all the learners in class. This brings a delay in curriculum coverage as these educators have to start with the Grade R work for those learners who did not attempt the Reception class, like in developing the fine motor skills and the eye–hand coordination. This demands a skilled and dedicated educator as there is no curriculum guideline that gives guidance on how to teach learners with diverse literacy skills, as the stipulated curriculum for Grade 1 does not cater for learners who did not attend any Grade R or graduated from Grade R in community based centres that were operating independently with no formal guidelines followed.
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University.


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the gap. Malaysia: Universiti Putra Malaysia.
APPENDIX A: Letter to the District Manager of Uthungulu district requesting permission to undertake research at schools

Phindile Mazibuko-Khuzwayo
0721475669
035-9011420
phindile.khuzwayo@kzndoe.gov.za
hpkhuzwayo@gmail.com

Dear Sir

REQUEST TO CONDUCT A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN 2 PRIMARY SCHOOLS AT NKANDLA AND MTHONJANENI CIRCUITS.

I am currently doing my Doctoral Degree at the University of Zululand on exploring literacy attainment levels of Foundation Phase learners in schools under Uthungulu District.

I am asking for your permission to conduct the research in two primary schools at Nkandla and Mthonjaneni circuits. This will be a qualitative research which will fall under the interpretative paradigm. The topic of the study is: Exploring isiZulu home language literacy attainment levels of Foundation Phase learners at entry and exit points at schools in the Uthungulu district.

The objectives of the study are:

- To find out the nature of the relationship between prior learning and academic performance in isiZulu in Grade 1 (entry point) and Grade Three (exit point) as the result of exposure to Grade R.
- To establish the extent to which learners have attained isiZulu Home language literacy skills by the time they enter Grade 1.
- To ascertain how educators identify learners’ actual development level in IsiZulu literacy.
To determine espoused approaches to the teaching of learners who are at different development levels in IsiZulu literacy.

The study seeks to explore Grade 1 learners’ literacy attainment levels when they start formal schooling. It is hoped that the identification of literacy levels will assist policy makers and educators in the development and the implementation of emergent literacy teaching strategies for learners in schools. Gauging the literacy levels of this grade seeks to assist in establishing whether Grade R is making any difference in improving literacy competences for Grade 1 learners. The study also seeks to assist Grade 1 educators to be acquainted with the kind of learners they are receiving in the beginning of the year and to know which level to pitch their literacy activities.

The main participants will be Grade 1 learners who have graduated from Grade R and those who did not go through Grade R. Educators of these learners will be interviewed in order to get valuable data for the study. The school and the names of learners will be strictly confidential. I am not going to interrupt any teaching and learning activities at these schools while collecting my data. A final copy of this study can be given to the department if needed.

Thank you.

________________________

H . P Mazibuko-Khuzwayo
APPENDIX B: A permission letter from Kwazulu-Natal Department of Basic Education to conduct a research

Ms HP Khuzwayo
P O Box 642
KWA-DLANGEZWA 3886

Dear Ms Khuzwayo

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: EXPLORING ISIZULU HOME LANGUAGE ATTAINMENT LEVELS OF FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS AT ENTRY AND EXIT POINTS IN SCHOOLS AT UTHUNGULU DISTRICT, 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 01 November 2013 to 31 March 2014.
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 Mr. Alwar 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

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar Tel: 033 341 8610 Ref.:2/4/8
Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, 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 (Uthungulu District)

Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
Date: 19 November 2013

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 392 1004 Fax: 033 392 1203

EMAIL ADDRESS: kehologile.conn@kzndoe.gov.za; CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363;
WEBSITE: www.kzneducation.gov.za
APPENDIX C: Ethical clearance certificate

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
(Reg No: UZREC 171110-30)

University of Zululand
Website: http://www.unizulu.ac.za
Private Bag X1001
KwaDlangezwa 3806
Tel: 035 902 6887
Fax: 035 902 6222
Email: MangeleS@unizulu.ac.za

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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<td>Exploring Isizulu home language literacy attainment level of grade one learning at entry points in schools at uThungulu District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Researcher/Investigator</td>
<td>HP Khuzwayo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor and Co-supervisor</td>
<td>Dr. JN Mashiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature of Project</td>
<td>Honours/4th Year Master’s Doctoral x Departmental</td>
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The University of Zululand’s Research Ethics Committee (UZREC) hereby gives ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project proposal and the documents listed on page 2 of this Certificate. Special conditions, if any, are also listed on page 2.

The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this Certificate, using the reference number indicated above, but may not conduct any data collection using research instruments that are yet to be approved.

Please note that the UZREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the documents that were presented to the UZREC
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

The Principal Researcher must report to the UZREC in the prescribe format, where applicable, annually and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

Page 1 of 2
The table below indicates which documents the UZREC considered in granting this Certificate and which documents, if any, still require ethical clearance. (Please note that this is not a closed list and should new instruments be developed, these may also require approval.)

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**Special conditions:** Documents marked “To be submitted” must be presented for ethical clearance before any data collection can commence.

The UZREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this Certificate if
  - Any unethical principles or practices are revealed or suspected
  - Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented
  - Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require
  - The conditions contained in this Certificate have not been adhered to

- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project

The UZREC wishes the researcher well in conducting the research.

Professor Rob Midgley  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation  
Chairperson: University Research Ethics Committee  
10 March 2014
Dear parent,

I am currently doing my Doctoral Degree at the University of Zululand researching on the literacy levels of Grade 1 learners when they start their schooling. I would like your child to be part of my study. S/he is not going to be interrupted in any of his/her learning activities.

Results of this study will be published but confidentiality of identifying information like the name of your child and school will be strictly maintained. There are no costs for your child to take part in this study. You are free to withdraw your child from participating at any time and that will not affect his/ her rights to learning.

If you are happy for your child to take part in this study please fill in and sign the attached consent form and return it to school by 23/01/2014. Should you have any queries regarding the study, please fill free to contact me at any time in the above-stated numbers.

Thank you.

__________________________

H. P Mazibuko-Khuzwayo
Mzali

Ngenza iziqu zami zobudokotela bezemfundo e University of Zululand ngabantwana baka Grade 1. Ngicela ukuthi umntwana wakho abe yingxenye yocwanningo. Angeke aphazamiseke ekufundeni kwakhe.

Imiphumela yalolucwanningo izoshicilelwana kodwa igama lesikole nelomntwana lizoba yimfihlo angeke laziwe. Akukhokhwa lutho ukuba yingxenye yalolucwanningo. Uvumelelekele ukumyekisa umntwana wakho kulolucwanningo noma nini futhi angeke kuthikameze ilungelo lokufunda kwakhe.

Uma uthanda ukuthi umntwana wakho abe yingxenye yalolucwanningo ngicela ugcwalise uphinde usayine leliform elingaphansi kwalencwadi ulibuyise esikoleni mhlaka 23 January 2014. Uma unemibuzo maqondana naloluqwanningo, ukhululekile ukuthi ungingxhume kulemininingwane ebhalwe phezulu.

Ngiyabonga

___________

H. P Mazibuko-Khuzwayo
APPENDIX E: Consent form

I __________________________ (parent) give a consent for my child________________________ to take part in the research study conducted by Phindile Mazibuko-Khuzwayo from the University of Zululand towards her Doctoral Degree. I understand that all references of my child will be anonymous and untraceable.

Sign __________________

Date___________________
APPENDIX E: Consent form (written in IsiZulu)

Mina____________________________(mzali) nginikeza imvume ngomntwana wami______________________________ ukuthi abe ingxenye yocwaningo luka Phindile Mazibuko-Khuzwayo osuka e University of Zululand ezifundweni zakhe zobudokotel bezemfundo. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi igama lomntwana wami liyoba imfihlo.

Sayina_________________________

Usuku_________________________
APPENDIX F: Letter to educators requesting them to take part in the study

Phindile Mazibuko-Khuzwayo

0721475669

035 -9011420(w)

035-7721065 (h)

phindile.khuzwayo@kzndoe.gov.za
hpkhuzwayo@gmail.com

Dear educator

I am currently doing my Doctoral Degree at the University of Zululand exploring on IsiZulu Home Language literacy attainment levels of Foundation Phase learners at entry and exit points. I would like you to be part of my study.

Results of this study will be published but confidentiality of identifying information like your name and your school will be strictly maintained. There are no costs for you to take part in this study. You are free to withdraw from participating at any time and that will not affect any of your teaching rights.

If you are happy to take part in this study please fill in and sign the attached consent form and return it to school by 23/01/2014. Should you have any queries regarding the study, please fill free to contact me at any time in the above- stated numbers.

Thank you.

______________

H. P Mazibuko-Khuzwayo
APPENDIX G: Consent form

I___________________ (educator) give consent to take part in the research study conducted by Phindile Mazibuko-Khuzwayo from the University of Zululand towards her Doctoral Degree. I understand that all my references will be anonymous and untraceable. I understand that I have the rights to withdraw anytime if I am no longer interested to take part in this study.

Sign __________________

Date__________________
APPENDIX H: Literacy activities for Grade 1 learners

SECTION A: LISTENING AND SPEAKING

USUKU LWAMI LOKUQALA ESIKOLENI


ACTIVITIES

Leaners will be engaged in the following activities:

1. I will ask questions based on the story. Examples some questions to be asked:

   - Wadlani uLindelwe ekuseni ngaphambi kokuya esikoleni?
   - Ubani igama likasisi kaLindelwe?
   - Ubefunda ibanga (Grade) bani u Asanda?
   - Lithini igama lesikole sikaLindelwe?
   - Ubani isibongo sika memu wa Lindelwe?

2. I will ask the sampled learners some questions based on their personal details. Example of some questions to be asked:

   - Ubani igama lakho?
   - Ubani isibongo sakho?
   - Nibangaki kwenu?
   - Ithini inombolo kamakhalekhukhwini ka mama/baba wakho?

3. I will ask them to tell the class about their first day at school as in the story.
APPENDIX I: Schedule to be used for observing learners during data collection

NAME OF THE LEARNER : ____________________________

NAME OF SCHOOL : ____________________________

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<th>OBSERVATION</th>
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APPENDIX J: Schedule of instruments answering the research questions

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<td>What is the nature of the relationship between prior learning and learners’ academic performance in IsiZulu at entry and exit points?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observations, activities &amp; interviews</td>
<td>To what extent have learners attained IsiZulu Home language literacy skills by the time they enter Grade 1?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observations, Interviews &amp; activities</td>
<td>How do teachers identify learners’ actual development level in IsiZulu literacy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations &amp; interviews</td>
<td>Which approaches to teaching literacy are espoused in the teaching of multi-level classrooms?</td>
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APPENDIX K: SCHEDULED INTERVIEW FOR GRADE 1 EDUCATORS

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please tick on appropriate box.

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B. Age

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C. Highest qualifications

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D. Teaching experience in years

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<th>11 -15</th>
<th>15- above</th>
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E. Grade 1 teaching experience in years

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<th>11 – 15</th>
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SECTION B

LITERACY ATTAINMENT LEVELS OF LEARNERS

Are there any differences in the literacy attainment levels in the five skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and handwriting) between a learner who has attended any Grade R class and the one who did not? If yes, specify.

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What are your experiences regarding the learners who attended Grade R in school based centres and those from community centres in the five skills?

Which category (those that attended Grade R in school based centres, or in community based centres or those without any prior learning) is struggling the most with literacy skills? Specify.

Which skill (s) is challenging for learners in each category? Specify.

SECTION C

IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNERS` ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT

How do you identify the learners` zone of proximal development?

What strategies do you use to establish what the child already knows?
How do you set your activities?

Which skills do you focus on in your baseline assessment, and why?

How do learners perform in these baseline activities?

What causes the way they perform?

Do you ask them about their backgrounds as a contributory factor? Explain.

Which skills do you think are more challenging? How?
SECTION D

APPROACHES IN THE TEACHING OF MULTI-LEVEL CLASSROOMS

➢ Which approach do you use in teaching multi-level classrooms?
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➢ After identifying the gaps, how do you deal with them?
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➢ What difficulties do you experience?
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➢ How do learners perform?
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➢ What is their pace?
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➢ Does the gap between the three categories shrink? How long does it take?
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➢ How are you coping with multi-level teaching?
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➢ Which skill do you feel is most challenging to the learners among the five skills?
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➢ Which category of learners do you think struggle more in each literacy skill(s)?
How do you support them?
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