

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND VALIDATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The traditional role of the educator has changed a great deal in recent years due to a stronger focus on learner-centred teaching practices. In the educator-oriented and content-based teaching approach of the previous education system, the educator was seen as the person who communicated information – usually from a textbook – to passive learners and to establish whether learners were able to reproduce it, unchanged, in tests and examinations (Sonn, 2000:257-265; Schraw & Olafson, 2003:178-239; Borich, 2004:370). Teaching chiefly entailed one-way communication and what the educator and textbook said was seldom challenged (Fraser, 2006:1).

However, this traditional role has changed significantly, as pointed out specifically in section 10 of the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (SA, 2007; hereafter Policy Framework for Teacher Education). Section 3 of the Norms and Standards for Educators (SA, 2000; hereafter Norms and Standards) points out that the modern-day educator needs to show *applied competence* in guiding learners towards not just learning passively, but to being actively involved in comprehending the newly found knowledge and actively demonstrating the thinking skills that accompany their learning process. At the same time, the *directive principles* in the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 (hereafter National Policy Act; 27 of 1996:sec.4(a)(vi, (b), (e) & (f)) indicate the need (1) to acknowledge learners' rights concerning their religion/conscience/belief, (2) to encourage the development of learners' potential, (3) to promote fundamental rights, (4) to offer chances and support lifelong learning, and (5) to endorse independent critical thinking.

Given the new education dispensation that aims at developing a national school education system that will, among other things, offer quality education intent on expanding all learners' aptitudes and potentials while at the same

time maintaining their fundamental rights (South African Schools Act, hereafter Schools Act; 84 of 1996:Preamble), the focus needs to fall on legal expectations that concern educators in general. A competent educator is, for example, depicted as a person showing the ability to fulfil the seven roles and competences successfully in the teaching process in classrooms (SA, 2000:reg.3.6).

The first of these seven roles refers to the educator acting as a learning mediator. This role calls on educators to be especially aware of their learners' divergent learning needs and to adapt their teaching strategies accordingly. It is in this regard that mediation could be seen as a complement to promoting learners' fundamental rights, since several of Feuerstein's twelve criteria (Feuerstein, in Falik, 2001b) that characterize the Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) are aimed at, among other things, acknowledging their best interests, protecting their right to a basic education, introducing them to others' cultural values, encouraging originality and independence.

It is essential first to understand that, according to law, all persons carry various rights and responsibilities. As children have a right to a basic education, they should realize that they also have certain obligations, for example to participate actively in the learning process, as well as to attend school (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2001:25).

These days there is an overwhelming focus on the protection of fundamental human rights, and this includes the necessity to protect learners against cruelty and inhumanity, while simultaneously *upholding* their fundamental rights (see specifically Schools Act, 84 of 1996; National Policy Act, 27 of 1996).

Thus, with opinions regarding learners' place in society and at schools having changed drastically since the middle of the nineteenth century (Squelch, 2000:7), the emphasis on young persons' rights in South Africa (see specifically Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996:sec 28(2); hereafter Constitution) and the significant change in the traditional role of the educator, the onus falls on the researcher especially to suggest ways in

which to assist educators in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as mediators competently in order to advance learners' fundamental rights.

In the absence of national and international research studies that combine an Education Law and Teaching and Learning Perspectives on Mediation, this study wishes to make a contribution.

1.2 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The intent of this concurrent triangulation mixed-methods study was to address the central problem in investigating how effectively mediation was applied to advance learners' fundamental rights in the classroom and to gain a deeper understanding of learners' and educators' perceptions regarding the use of a meditational approach during teaching. The study included Grade 11 learner and educator participants at purposively selected schools in the Fezile Dabi District of the Free State Education Department. Survey research in the form of learner and educator questionnaires and focus group interviews with educators and classroom observations during English literature lessons were used to collect data. The reason for combining both quantitative and qualitative data was to understand this research problem better by bringing together both quantitative (broad numeric trends) and qualitative (detailed views) data.

Moreover, the intent of this concurrent triangulation mixed-methods study was to consider which meditational processes and components could be suggested to design a teaching and learning programme to advance learners' fundamental rights in English First Additional Language (the subject the researcher teaches) in attempting to find answers to the central problem.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.3.1 Primary question

How effectively is mediation applied in the English literature classroom to advance learners' fundamental rights?

1.3.2 Secondary research questions

Against the above-mentioned background and with the primary question in mind, this research wished to address the following secondary research questions:

- Of what does mediation comprise?
- What constitutes learners' fundamental rights in terms of South African legislation?
- What is English educators' understanding of the concept *mediator of learning*?
- How do English educators understand the competence expected from mediators of learning?
- What are learners' views regarding the role their English educators play in the classroom?
- What is learners' understanding of how their rights are managed in the English classroom?
- How do English educators comply with the principles of mediation during teaching?
- How do English educators accommodate the fundamental rights of learners?
- How does a mediational approach support the fundamental rights of learners?
- Which mediational processes and components could be suggested to design a programme aimed at advancing learners' fundamental rights?

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The researcher identified the following ten objectives which guided her research process:

- To investigate of what mediation comprises
- To establish what constituted learners' fundamental rights in terms of South African legislation
- To determine English educators' understanding of the concept *mediator of learning*
- To gauge English educators' understanding of the competences expected from mediators of learning
- To establish learners' views regarding the role their English educators played in the classroom
- To identify learners' understanding of how their rights were managed in the English classroom
- To observe how English educators complied with the principles of mediation during teaching
- To investigate how English educators accommodated the fundamental rights of learners
- To establish how a mediational approach supported the fundamental rights of learners
- To suggest mediational processes and components to design a teaching and learning programme aimed at advancing learners' fundamental rights in a language classroom context.

1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concepts central to the literature review were *mediation* and *fundamental rights*. The conceptual framework for this study was based on the theory of the mediational approach as conceptualized by Feuerstein (2007:14-16) and a comparative law perspective as conceptualized by Venter, Van der Walt, Pienaar, Olivier and Du Plessis (1990:211).

1.5.1 Mediation

The theory of mediated learning experience (MLE) is theory-driven. Feuerstein (2007) postulates that the quality of mediated learning experience can be achieved only if a number of MLE criteria are met. Among the most important of these criteria are intentionality and reciprocity of interaction, its transcended character (having significance beyond a here-and-now situation) and the mediation of meaning (Kozulin, 2003:22).

Falik (2001a:4-12) divides Feuerstein's twelve criteria into three categories:

- Universal criteria (*cf.* 2.5.1): present in all interpersonal interactions and necessary to create the conditions for general development, comfort, extended and elaborated learning. These criteria are:
 - ✓ intentionality and reciprocity;
 - ✓ transcendence; and
 - ✓ mediation of meaning.
- Situational or phase-specific criteria (*cf.* 2.5.2): related to specific situations or tasks which present opportunities for mediational intervention. The criteria are:
 - ✓ mediation of regulation and control of behaviour;
 - ✓ mediation of feelings of competence;
 - ✓ mediation of sharing behaviour;
 - ✓ mediation of individuation and psychological differentiation;
 - ✓ mediation of goal seeking/goal setting/goal achieving/goal monitoring;
and
 - ✓ mediation of challenge, novelty and complexity.

- Integrative orienting belief system criteria (*cf.* 2.5.3): necessary to integrate changes in functioning into cognitive structures for sustained behavioural change and self-perpetuation, these criteria are:
 - ✓ mediation of an awareness of the human being as a changing entity;
 - ✓ mediation of the search for optimizing alternatives; and
 - ✓ mediation of a feeling of belonging.

1.5.2 Fundamental rights

Together with the international attempt at striving towards the constitutionalization of human rights, a dynamic movement has aimed at recognizing the fundamental rights of children and therefore of learners. While it is generally known that section 29(1)(a) of the Constitution (1996) grants everyone the right to a basic education, section 28(2) enhances not only learners' right to education, but also their right to having their fundamental rights acknowledged in the classroom (De Waal & Grösser, 2009:698). This is done by section 28(2) stipulating children's best interests as of paramount importance in every matter relating to them.

1.5.3 A comparative law perspective

As pointed out by Venter *et al.* (1990:211), the comparative law method could be described as a *unique, systematic and jurisprudential* plan that aims at obtaining novel facts and reaching sound understanding concerning the specific topic that is placed under the magnifying glass. Such a comparative study will be done in Chapter Three of this thesis.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.6.1 Research paradigm

The researcher framed her study within a pragmatic world view. According to Creswell (2009b:10), pragmatism is a worldview that arises out of actions, situations and consequences rather than antecedent conditions. Instead of

focusing on methods, researchers emphasize the research problem and use all approaches available to understand the problem.

As the pragmatic approach deals with consequences of actions, is problem-centred, pluralistic and real-world practice-oriented and is used in mixed-methods research (Mertens & Creswell, in MacKenzie & Knipe, 2010:7), the researcher followed a pragmatic approach in this study. The researcher aimed towards solving a problem: to seek an approach to teaching and learning where the educator can act as mediator and, in doing so, advance fundamental rights of learners (*cf.* 4.2).

1.6.2 Research design

Linked to the pragmatic research paradigm, a mixed-methods design was chosen and applied in this research (*cf.* 4.2) in order to validate findings and recommendations, as proof would be found not only in documents, but also in practice.

This researcher followed a mixed-methods design by implementing both quantitative and qualitative research designs in order to investigate, explore and understand how effectively educators apply mediation in the classroom to advance learners' fundamental rights and to design a teaching and learning programme aimed at advancing learners' fundamental rights.

The type of mixed-methods design used in this research followed a concurrent triangulation design (Creswell, 2009b:213; *cf.* 4.2). According to Cohen and Manion (1995:233), *triangulation* may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. Theoretically speaking, the triangulation design was used because the strengths of each approach can be applied to provide not only a more complete result, but also one that would be more valid (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:28; Nieuwenhuis, 2007c:80).

A more detailed description of the research design is provided in Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.3).

1.6.2.1 Strategies of inquiry

1.6.2.1.1 The quantitative component

In this study, the researcher made use of non-experimental, descriptive survey research by using two questionnaires, one for Grade 11 learners and one for their English educators (*cf.* 1.5.2), as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.2).

When carefully considered and applied, survey research is a natural, ready-to-use way to elicit information (Maree & Pietersen, 2007a:159). In survey research, the investigator selects a sample of subjects and administers a questionnaire and/or conducts interviews to collect data. Surveys are used frequently in educational research to describe attitudes, beliefs, opinions and other types of information (*cf.* 1.5.2 & 4.2). Usually, the research is designed so that information about a large number of people, the population, can be inferred from the responses obtained from a smaller group of subjects, the sample (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:25).

1.6.2.1.2 The qualitative component

The researcher used a phenomenological approach in this research, as will be referred to also in Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.2).

According to Groenewald (2004:5), Leedy and Ormrod (2005:139) and Merriam (2009:24-25), a phenomenological study is a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understandings of a particular situation. The aim of the researcher of this thesis was therefore to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework, but remaining true to the facts (*cf.* 4.2).

This researcher picked focus group interviews and observations as the data-gathering instruments for the qualitative component of the research (*cf.* 4.3). Selecting the focus group interview strategy as part of the qualitative research phase of this study, could enhance the possibility of gaining insight into the perspectives of educators who teach Grade 11 English literature classes (*cf.*

1.5.2; 4.2). Using classroom observations could provide first-hand insight into how educators comply/do not comply with mediation principles (*cf.* 4.2).

1.6.2.1.3 Comparative education law design

In order to gain an educational-juridical perspective on how effectively mediation is applied in the English literature classroom to advance learners' fundamental rights (*cf.* 1.3.1), the researcher decided to include a comparative education law study as Chapter Three of this thesis in order to scrutinize and report on relevant legal sources in an informed manner, as will be pointed out in greater detail later (*cf.* 3.2).

With McMillan (2008:189) pointing out that a comparative study allows the researcher to obtain insight and evaluate information by comparing and weighing data, the researcher aimed at gaining an educational-juridical perspective on both educators' roles as mediators in the classrooms and advancing learners' fundamental rights in Chapter Three.

1.6.2.2 Research participants

The researcher made use of non-probability purposive sampling (*cf.* 4.2), by only using educators who teach English to Grade 11 learners and only involving Grade 11 learners in the research. In purposive sampling, people are chosen for a particular purpose, such as would be the case when participants who represent diverse perspectives on an issue are chosen (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:206).

The characteristics of the chosen sample involved the following: one township school¹ (*cf.* 1.5.2) and three town schools were involved in the study. There were only three town schools that could have been used in the research. All the participants were in Grade 11, thus involving learners of approximately 17-19 years of age: $n = 298$.

¹ The Fezile Dabi District Office gave permission for this research to be conducted at only one township school: they were specific about which school to include.

The reason for choosing Grade 11 learners was due to the fact that it is nearly impossible to use Grade 12 learners since they are preparing for their final academic year at secondary school and their year is too busy to fit a study such as this one into learners and educators' schedules. Lower grades were not chosen as the focus was on Teaching and Learning in literature classes and literature assessment does not receive the same prominence in Grades 8-10.

The participating learners were male as well as female and they came from a variety of cultural groups, such as Zulu, Sotho and Tswana.

More detail on the research participants of this study will follow in the chapter on the research design, Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.3).

1.6.2.3 Methods of data collection

1.6.2.3.1 Quantitative research: questionnaires

As indicated above (*cf.* 1.5.2), the researcher decided on using two questionnaires as research instruments for the quantitative component of the research: one for learners and one for educators.

The perceptions and views of the learner and educator participants were measured by using a Likert scale: this is a summated attitude scale that consists of a collection of statements about the attitudinal object and its popularity stems from the fact that it is easy to compile. In respect of each statement, subjects have to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with its content on, for instance, a four-point scale such as *strongly agree, agree, disagree* or *strongly disagree* (Welman *et al.*, 2005:167). According to Maree and Pietersen (2007a:167), a Likert scale is commonly used in survey research to measure the vigour of feelings and opinions about something.

The one advantage of using the questionnaire that convinced the researcher of this thesis to include it as research instrument, is that a large number of

learners and educators and administrators could be represented (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:28-29).

The purpose of the two questionnaires that were developed for this research was to determine:

- English educators' understanding of the concept *mediator of learning*;
- English educators' understanding of the competence expected from mediators of learning;
- learners' views regarding the role their English educators play in the classroom;
- learners' understanding of how their rights are advanced in the English classroom; and
- how English educators advance the fundamental rights of learners.

A broader discussion of the questionnaire as research instrument and feedback on the Likert scale of the two questionnaires that were used in this research will follow in the chapter on the research design, Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.3).

1.6.2.3.2 Pilot study

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:110), a pilot study is a first-rate way of finding out whether the study would be practicable or not. Even though it may take time at first, it could save researchers much time in the end if they take the trouble to determine which approaches would and would not be effective in solving the overall research problem.

Such a study was conducted before the actual study ran and the results are reported in the chapter on the research design, Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.3). Moreover, significant aspects of reliability and validity will also be addressed in that chapter (*cf.* 4.3).

1.6.2.3.3 Qualitative research: focus groups and observations

- **Focus group interviews**

As indicated by Creswell (2009b:226), a focus group interview involves the process of gathering data by conducting interviews with a group of people, typically four to six in size. The basic idea is for the researcher to pose a small number of focused questions and extract a variety of responses from all the participants in the group. Focus groups are especially helpful when the communication among the participants would most likely provide the finest information and when participants are similar to and cooperative with one another (Creswell, 2009b:226).

An important advantage of using focus group interviews is that descriptions are provided in the voices that are specific to each group (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:29). According to Mertler (2009:110), focus group interviews are especially useful when time is limited and because people are often more comfortable talking in a small group, as opposed to doing so individually. Furthermore, interactions among the focus group participants may be extremely informative due to the tendency of people to feed off others' comments.

In the case of this research, the researcher decided to conduct focus group interviews with the educators who teach Grade 11 English at the four schools included in the sample since they were similar to and cooperated with one another in their subject. Moreover, the aim was to gather sound information as the participants became more and more involved in reactions that would be gleaned from one another's comments/answers.

The purpose of the interviews in this study was to gain a deeper understanding of:

- the meaning English educators attach to the concept *mediator of learning*;
- the perceptions of English educators concerning the competences expected from mediators of learning;

- how English educators comply with the principles of mediation during teaching; and
- how English educators accommodate the fundamental rights of learners.

A more detailed discussion of the concept of focus group interviews and a report on the interviews that were conducted during the research of this thesis will follow in the chapter on the research design, Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.4.2).

- **Observations**

Bearing in mind that the role of an observer is to remain at a distance from the group or process, acting as a complete spectator (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:207), observations were done in each of the volunteering English educators' literature periods (*cf.* 4.4.2.2). The purpose of these classroom observations was to be able to provide a running record on whether the identified mediation principles actually occur during teaching and learning (*cf.* 4.4.2).

Observations are usually recorded in great detail, perhaps with field notes or videotapes that capture the wide variety of ways in which people act and interact (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:179). Nieuwenhuis (2007c:84) mentions that observations allow us to hear, see and begin to experience reality as the participants do. Observation notes should be made while the group activities are taking place.

In this study, the researcher was a complete spectator/observer who took down reflective field notes (McMillan, 2008:280) as part of the prepared observation schedule while the class activities were taking place. Reflective comments were added to what was observed (*cf.* 4.4.2.2).

A more detailed discussion of the concept *observations* and feedback on the actual observations that were done during the course of this research will follow in the chapter on the research design, Chapter Four.

1.6.2.4 A visual representation of the research design

Based on all of the above aspects that were mentioned under the heading *Research design* (cf. 1.5.2), the researcher could illustrate the research design for this study visually as shown below in Figure 1.1.

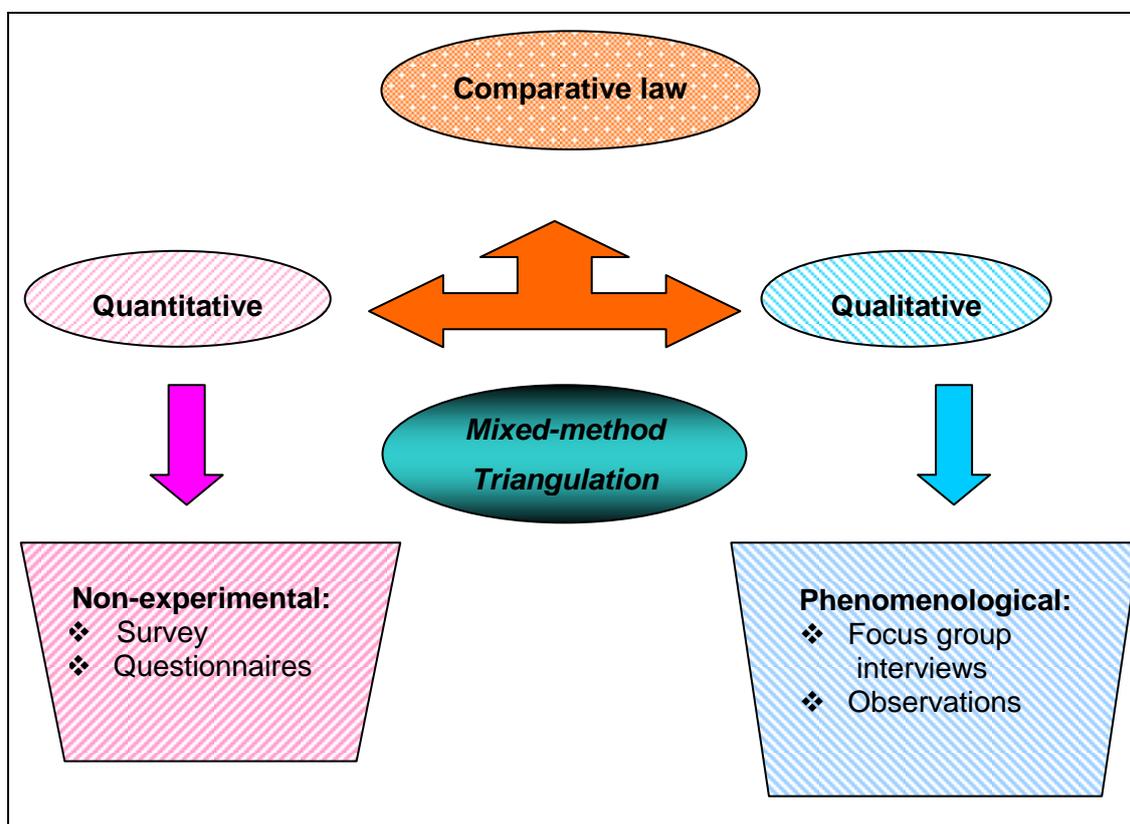


Figure 1.1: Research design

1.6.2.5 Data collection process

All mixed-method designs have some common features or characteristics that are deployed in different ways that distinguish them from one another. These characteristics include the sequence or order of collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data, and results are mixed or integrated during the research process (Ivankova *et al.*, 2007:268).

1.6.2.5.1 Timing

Proposal developers need to consider the timing of their qualitative and quantitative data collection whether it will be in phases, that is sequentially, or gathered at the same time, that is concurrently (Creswell, 2009b:206). If the

purpose of the study is to triangulate or synthesize the findings from both quantitative and qualitative parts of the study, as is the case in the triangulation design, then the two types of data are collected and analysed simultaneously and are compared to each other (Ivankova *et al.*, 2007:269).

The researcher made use of a concurrent timing decision, as will be pointed out further in the chapter on the research design, Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.3).

1.6.2.5.2 Weighting

According to Creswell (2009b:206), a second factor that goes into designing procedures is the weight or priority given to quantitative or qualitative research in a particular study. In some studies, like this one, the weight might be equal, as is indicated in the chapter on the research design, Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.3).

1.6.2.5.3 Mixing

Mixing means either that the qualitative and quantitative data are actually merged on one end of the continuum, kept separate on the other end of the continuum or combined in some way between these two extremes (Creswell, 2009b:207-208). In the triangulation design, the purpose of which is to compare the two types of data to understand the research problem better, mixing can occur at the data analysis stage. If the purpose of the study is to develop a composite model grounded in both types of data, integration will occur at the data interpretation stage at the end of the study (Ivankova *et al.*, 2007:270).

In this study, the researcher firstly circulated the questionnaires – quantitative study – among the educators and learners. At the same time, focus group interviews – qualitative study – took place with the English subject educators of the respective schools. Lastly a total of six observations – qualitative study – were conducted with the two Grade 11 English educators who volunteered (*cf.* 4.4.2.2). In this research the researcher followed the mixing decision of combining the data during the scrutiny phase of interpretation and analysis, as will be indicated in the chapter on the research design, Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.3; 4.3.1).

1.6.2.6 The role of the researcher

Researchers need to reflect on being the instrument of data collection during the qualitative phases of research since qualitative research methodologies acknowledge the fact that such researchers are, to some extent, personally involved in the course of their research (Willig, 2008:13). According to Theron and Grösser (2010:2), the researcher is the key to data generation and data interpretation. As the researcher is involved in sustained and extensive experiences with participants, it must be remembered that a researcher can easily be influenced by:

- historical, social and cultural experiences, such as that the researcher may be afraid to conduct research at a specific school;
- assumptions, in that those which the researcher hold could cloud her judgement;
- personal connection to site or participants, such as having previously been an educator there which could make obtaining permission to conduct research easier; and
- steps in gaining entry (positioned as an outsider), such as that the Fezile Dabi District may not give permission to include schools in the study (*cf.* 1.5.2).

Merriam (2009:228) underlines Patton's *credibility of the researcher* as one of the fundamental mechanisms to give surety to the reputation of qualitative research and adds three other tactics (Merriam, 2009:26; *cf.* 4.3.2.2): *phenomenological reduction*, pointing to going back to the heart of the understandings time and again; *horizontalization*, pointing to managing data as being equally important; and *imaginative variation*, pointing to looking at the data from different vantage points, just as one would walk right around a fountain in order to see it from all possible directions.

If the researcher were to follow the practice of *epoche*, a Greek term which indicates avoiding one's own opinion to influence phenomenological research,

it would support the honest attempt of determining personal intolerances, perspectives and suppositions (Merriam, 2009:25).

Among others, McMillan (2008:51) underlines the fact that the researcher of this thesis needs to give consideration to her own assumptions and biases as her research for the completion of this thesis progresses (*cf.* 4.3). Thus the researcher aimed at ensuring that she would not end up collecting data *to prove something to be true*, but rather continued with sound research, based on an unbiased primary research question (*cf.* 1.3.1).

A report on how the role of the researcher of this thesis played out will be given in the chapter on the research design, Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.4.2).

1.6.2.7 Data analysis and interpretation

The detailed data analysis and interpretation as they apply to the research that was conducted for the completion of this thesis will be given in Chapter Five of this document.

1.6.2.7.1 Quantitative: questionnaire

The quantitative data were collected by means of two questionnaires. The researcher required the expertise of a professional statistician of the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, and she assisted the researcher in the analysis of data. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data for the learners and educators' responses to the questionnaire.

Statistics have two principal functions: to help the researcher in describing the data and drawing inferences from the data. Descriptive statistics summarize the general nature of the data obtained and inferential statistics help the researcher make decisions about the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:30).

- Descriptive statistics: According to Pietersen and Maree (2007b:183), this is a collective name for a number of statistical methods that are used to organize and summarize data in a meaningful way. Descriptive statistics can be divided into two ways of representing or describing data. The following descriptive statistics were used in this study:

- Frequency distribution: In such a distribution, the different response categories of the variable are shown together with the frequency (number) of participants, and usually also the frequency expressed as a percentage of the sample size, in each of the different categories (Pietersen & Maree, 2007b:184).
- Standard deviation: This is the standard measure of variability in most statistical procedures (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:262). The focus is on the spread of a distribution. Important information is revealed by the amount of spread in a distribution. It expresses the extent to which the data values tend to cluster close together or to be widely spread over the range of possible values (Pietersen & Maree, 2007b:188).

Only descriptive statistics were used because a small group was used in this study. Due to this reason, it was not possible to compare educator and learner responses with each other.

The feedback on the quantitative data analysis and interpretation of the results of the two questionnaires that were completed by learners and educators will be provided in Chapter Five of this document (*cf.* 5.2; 5.3).

1.6.2.7.2 Qualitative: focus group interviews and observations

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007a:101), content analysis is a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis that identifies and summarizes message content.

There is no single right way to analyze the data in a qualitative study. The researcher begins with a large body of information and must, through inductive reasoning, sort and categorize it and gradually boil it down to a small set of abstract, underlying themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:150).

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:140), the researcher takes the following steps during the data analysis of a phenomenological study:

- Identify statements that relate to the topic.

- Divide statements into *meaning units*.
- Seek divergent perspectives.
- Construct a composite.

Data analysis in mixed-methods research takes place within the quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (focus group interviews and observations) approaches. Both quantitative and qualitative data were interpreted together (triangulation method) once all the data had been collected.

In this study, the researcher made use of a deductive and inductive content analysis to analyse data obtained from interviews and observations. Deductive analysis entails one or more premises. These premises are statements or assumptions that are self-evident and widely accepted *truths*. Reasoning then proceeds logically from these premises towards conclusions that must also be true. Inductive analysis begins, not with a pre-established truth or an assumption, but with an observation. After an observation is made, conclusions about the population from which the sample comes are drawn (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:32).

The feedback on the qualitative data analysis and interpretation of the focus group interviews that were held and the classroom observations that were done will be provided in Chapter Five of this document.

1.6.2.8 Quality criteria

To ensure quality in the quantitative research, the researcher focused on reliability and validity. In Leedy and Ormrod's opinion (2005:27), researchers can effect the level to which they gain new knowledge by aiming at the validity and reliability.

In qualitative research, trustworthiness implies confirmability, credibility, dependability and applicability. The term trustworthiness refers to the way in which the researcher succeeds in convincing the interested parties that specific findings are noteworthy (Lincoln & Guba, in Maree, 2007:297).

The quality criteria which the researcher of this thesis adhered to will be discussed in the chapter on research design, Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.5).

1.6.3 Ethical aspects

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:142-144), ethics are considered to deal with beliefs about what is right or wrong, proper or improper, good or bad. Since most educational research deals with human beings, it is necessary to understand the ethical and legal responsibilities of conducting research.

The ethical responsibilities which the researcher of this thesis carried out will be discussed in the chapter on research design, Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.7).

1.7 TEACHING AND LEARNING PROGRAMME

Based on the findings of the research, the suggested teaching and learning programme in Chapter Six focused on processes and components to re-centre the educator from being mainly a transmitter of knowledge to a mediator during the teaching and learning process. The intention was not to imply that educators should not be transmitters of knowledge any more, but that they should also acquire the skills or competences of being mediators due to the stronger focus on learning needs nowadays than was the case with the traditional educators.

The programme was linked to the subject English – the subject the researcher teaches at school – and learning activities were designed according to the principles of mediation. The learning outcomes of English First Additional Language were linked to specific activities in the field of literature. These activities involved a mediational approach which assisted the educator not only in the activities used as an example, but also in planning future, similar activities based on mediation.

The Bill of Rights in the Constitution (1996:Chapter 2) enshrines the rights of all people and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. The State, through public schools, must protect, promote and fulfil

the rights identified in the Bill of Rights (1996:sec.7(2)). The question is whether this occurs at South African public schools. The proposed programme strove to advance fundamental rights.

1.8 POSSIBLE CHALLENGES

The researcher foresaw some challenges that could influence both the completion of the questionnaires and the conducting of the focus group interviews. While these challenges are indicated below, the feedback on how these challenges played out during the actual research process will be given in the chapter on research design, Chapter Four (*cf.* 4.8).

1.8.1 Questionnaires

- There was no guarantee that participants would understand all the questions or what was expected of them.
- Incomplete questionnaires might be submitted or some parts might be skipped.

1.8.2 Focus group interviews

- Difficulty when trying to arrange for all the participants to congregate in the same place at the same time could have led to the researcher having to remain patient in her efforts to arrange this.
- The domination of discussions by more outspoken individuals was managed by pointing to specific participants, calling on their valuable responses.

1.8.3 Observations

Frequently changing schedules and times at schools may hamper proper appointments for observations, thus calling on the researcher and co-observer to re-schedule the appointment or wait at the school.

1.9 CHAPTER DIVISION OF THIS THESIS

Chapter One: Orientation to the study

This chapter provides a short background to the study as well as the researcher's intention with the particular study.

Chapter Two: A mediational approach to teaching and learning

This chapter encompasses the importance of mediation in the teaching and learning process.

Chapter Three: Mediation and learners' fundamental rights: a legal framework

In this chapter, a fundamental right's framework was drawn to highlight relevant learners' fundamental rights.

Chapter Four: Empirical research design

This chapter encapsulates an explanation which is compulsory to understand the research design of the study.

Chapter Five: Data analysis and interpretation

In this chapter, the researcher provides an analysis of the data which were obtained during the empirical investigation period.

Chapter Six: A teaching and learning programme to support a mediation approach to advance fundamental learner rights in English First Additional Language

The focus of this chapter is to present the programme which was developed to advance fundamental rights in English First Additional Language.

Chapter Seven: Summary, findings and recommendations

This chapter provides a summation of the main aspects that were presented and discussed in this study and sets out recommendations to steer change in the research area.

1.10 SUMMARY

This chapter indicated the importance of mediation and fundamental rights in the classroom and outlined the unique relationship between the two aspects.

The researcher started off by introducing the research problem that was identified (*cf.* 1.1). Thereafter, the purpose statement was explained and the reader was informed about the participants that would be contributing to the findings of this study (*cf.* 1.2). The researcher formulated the primary (*cf.* 1.3.1) and secondary research questions (*cf.* 1.3.2) that needed to be answered by the end of this thesis. The researcher then identified the ten objectives that guided her in her research process (*cf.* 1.4). The conceptual framework gave the reader an idea of the framework on which the researcher wanted to base her study. The reader was informed that this study was built upon mediation (*cf.* 1.5.1), learners' fundamental rights (*cf.* 1.5.2) and a comparative law perspective (*cf.* 1.5.3). In the research methodology, the researcher revealed the pragmatic world view on which the study was based (*cf.* 1.6.1). The reader was informed that a pragmatic research paradigm would be used and the researcher would follow a triangulation design (*cf.* 1.6.2). The quantitative and qualitative components were shortly discussed and the reader was told what each of these two components would entail and the researcher revealed information about the participants that would be used in these two components (*cf.* 1.6.2.1; 1.6.2.2).

When discussing the methods of data collection, the researcher informed the reader on how the quantitative research would be conducted and how the questionnaires would be compiled (*cf.* 1.6.2.3). A brief reference to the pilot study was made and the reader was informed about the focus group interviews and observations that formed the qualitative research (*cf.* 1.6.2.4). The researcher designed a visual representation of the research design of this

study to give the reader a more compact illustration of the design that would be followed (*cf.* 1.6.2.4; Figure 1.1). The data collection process gave the reader an overview of how the data would be collected and what role the researcher would play in collecting the data (*cf.* 1.6.2.5; 1.6.2.6). The data collection methods, data analysis and data interpretation were discussed and the reader was informed about the quality criteria that would be used to ensure reliable data (*cf.* 1.6.2.7; 1.6.2.8). The reader was then told about the teaching and learning programme that would be developed to help educators to mediate learning and teaching and also advance their learners' fundamental rights simultaneously (*cf.* 1.7). The researcher shortly referred to possible challenges that were foreseen in this study (*cf.* 1.8). Lastly, the reader was given the chapter division of the thesis (*cf.* 1.9).

Chapter Two will focus on a mediational approach to teaching and learning.