

**IDENTIFICATION OF SPELLING
DIFFICULTIES
OF THE FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE
OF GRADE THREE LEARNERS WITH
TSWANA
AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION**

M.M. FRYER Hons B. ed

Study leader: Prof. P du Toit

2007

Potchefstroom

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the following people who contributed to the completion of this study:

- My study leader, Prof. Dr. P du Toit, for her guidance, encouragement and support throughout.
- University of the North-West lecturers in Educational Psychology department for guiding and supporting me through my studies.
- My gratitude is extended to the library personnel of the University of the North-West
- Potchefstroom Campus.
- My family for their loving support during my period of study.
- Above all I give all the glory and honour to God who provided me with wisdom, perseverance and good health.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement.....	ii
Abstract.....	vi
Opsomming	viii

CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT, AIM OF STUDY, METHODOLOGY, CONCEPT DESCRIPTION, LIMITATIONS OF STUDY, AND PROGRAMME OF STUDY	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Problem statement.....	18
1.3	Aim of the study	19
1.4	Research methodology	20
1.4.1	Research design	20
1.4.2	Measuring instrument	21
1.4.3	Population and target groups	21
1.4.4	Implementation and analysis of the empirical research	22
1.4.5	Limitations of the empirical research.....	22
1.5	Concept description	23
1.5.1	Spelling and spelling difficulties	23
1.5.2	Identification of difficulties	23
1.5.3	Learner support.....	23
1.5.4	Foundation phase	23
1.5.5	Grade 3	24
1.5.6	Home language:.....	24
1.5.7	First additional language	24
1.6	Programme of the study.....	24

CHAPTER 2	THE EDUCATIONAL DISPENSATION IN THE LITERACY LEARNING AREA IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE.	25
2.1	Introduction	25
2.2	Language and literacy learning	26
2.3	Assessment in the LLP	31
2.4	Summary	38
CHAPTER 3	LANGUAGE AND SPELLING DEVELOPMENT, IDENTIFICATION OF SPELLING DIFFICULTIES, AND THE ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT THEREOF	39
3.1	Introduction	39
3.2	Language and spelling development	40
3.3	Causes of spelling difficulties	42
3.3.1	Intrinsic causes	43
3.3.2	Extrinsic causes	44
3.4	Identification of spelling difficulties	46
3.5	Assessment of the identified signs of spelling difficulties	49
3.6	Spelling support strategies	52
3.6.1	Learning styles	52
3.6.2	General principles for supporting spelling difficulties	53
3.6.3	Strategies for spelling support	56
3.6.3.1	Multisensory methods	57
3.6.3.2	Phonic programme	62
3.7	Summary	64
CHAPTER 4	EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION	65
4.1	Introduction	65
4.2	Methodology	65
4.2.1	Objectives of the empirical research	65
4.2.2	Research design	65
4.2.2.1	Method of research	65
4.2.2.2	Population and target group/sample	67
4.2.2.3	Measuring instrument	68
4.2.3	Implementation of empirical research	76

4.3	Results of the questionnaires.....	76
4.4	Discussion	81
4.4.1	General aspects.....	81
4.4.2	Aspects of behaviour	82
4.4.3	Aspects of language: reading, writing and oral	82
4.4.3.1	Writing difficulties	82
4.4.3.2	Reading difficulties.....	83
4.5	Summary	83
CHAPTER 5	SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	84
5.1	Introduction	84
5.2	Summary	84
5.3	Conclusions	85
5.4	Recommendations	88
5.4.1	Recommendations towards The Department of Education.....	88
5.4.2	Recommendations towards educators.....	90
5.4.3	Recommendations towards further research	91
5.5	Conclusion	91
	Bibliography	92
	Appendixes	98

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1:	Framework of OBE assessment strategies	32
TABLE 2:	The difference between the “old “curriculum and curriculum 2005.....	34

ABSTRACT

The intention of education in South Africa is that all learners should benefit in a new, inclusive education system. Inclusive education provides a single, integrated system which is able to recognise and respond to the diverse needs of the learner population, irrespective of the learning context. The most influential factor that caused the educational change was the introduction of Outcomes-based Education (OBE) in South Africa. Whilst inclusive education was a radical departure from previous apartheid and special education practices in South Africa, the implementation of OBE required a revolution in thinking about education. In fact, it is OBE that will allow inclusive education to succeed since OBE is inclusive in nature. The most important features of OBE are that, it establishes the conditions and opportunities, within the system, that enable and encourage all learners to achieve those essential outcomes like:

1. All learners can succeed but not necessarily on the same day.
2. Successful learning can result in more successful learning experiences.
3. Schools can create the space and possibilities for success.
4. Educators expect all learners to perform optimally”.

The majority of learners in South Africa who experience barriers to learning were already being taught in the mainstream since there was limited special provision for them. The state, in any case, has limited financial resources for separate special education, which implied that the national education system in South Africa at some time or other would have to deal with diversity.

Moreover, the scrapping of apartheid legislation saw the rapid diversification of formerly linguistically homogenous schools.

One of the most dramatic but unplanned consequences of the political changes that took place after the general election in 1994 as far as the education sector was concerned, was the sudden inflow of African language speakers into schools that had previously been open only to learners classified as White or Coloured. In addition to

this movement of African learners, there also has been a steady flow of Coloured and Indian learners to schools from which they were previously excluded.

The rapid changes in the linguistic profile of schools are, however, not accompanied by changes in the teaching staff. This has meant that in many classes the teachers may not be able to speak the language of a significant number of their learners. This is particularly problematic in the Foundation Phase, because where the teacher and the learners do not speak the same language, the communication between teacher and learners will be stunted. This may also result in discipline and control problems arising from the communication breakdown between teachers and learners who speak different languages.

The main objective of this empirical research is then to determine whether educators are able to identify learning difficulties experienced by learners in a first additional language in the Foundation Phase in Grade 3.

The main conclusion from the research was that the educators are unsure of the conceptual fields in which they work, and require specified guidance concerning the appropriate content and task standards they are supposed to teach and assess in. Educators are not equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify and support learners with spelling / learning difficulties in first additional language.

Therefore, it is recommended that the Department should consider regular in-service training where the educator will be taught how to support learners with barriers to learning and to focus on intervention strategies.

OPSOMMING

Die doel van opvoedkunde in Suid Afrika is om soveel moontlik leerders te bevoordeel binne 'n Inklusiewe- opvoedkundige stelsel.

Inklusiewe onderrig verskaf 'n enkele, geïntegreerde stelsel wat daartoe in staat is om die uiteenlopende behoeftes van die leerderpopulasie te erken en daarop te kan reageer, afgesien van die leerinhoud.

Die grootste enkele faktor wat die veranderinge in die onderwysstelsel veroorsaak het, was die inlywing van Uitkoms Gebaseerde Onderwys(UGO) in Suid-Afrika wat ook inklusief van aard is. Dit was 'n drastiese afwyking van die ou apartheids- en spesiale onderrigpraktyk in Suid- Afrika en was revolusionêr in die denkwysie rondom onderwys.

Die belangrikste eienskappe van UGO is dat dit omstandighede en geleenthede binne die stelsel skep om alle leerders aan te moedig en toe te rus om die volgende belangrike uitkomst te bereik:

1. Alle leerders sal hulle uitkomst bereik maar nie noodwendig op dieselfde dag nie.
2. Suksesvolle onderrig sal 'n meer suksesvolle onderrigservaring tot gevolg hê.
3. Skole kan die omgewing skep vir moontlike sukses.
4. Die onderriggewers verwag dat alle leerders optimaal sal presteer.

'n Dramatiese tog onbeplande gevolge van die algemene verkiesing van 1994 was die skielike invloed van Afrika- sprekende leerders in wit en gekleurde skole. Addisioneel hiertoe was ook 'n vloei van gekleurde en Indiër leerders na skole waartoe hulle voorheen uitgesluit was. Dit het tot gevolg dat die meerderheid leerders in Suid-Afrika 'n leer en taal probleem ondervind. Daar word egter nie "spesiale voorsiening" vir hulle gemaak nie a.g.v. beperkte finansiële bronne van die staat se kant af.

Hierdie drastiese veranderinge in die taalprofiel van skole het nie in lyn gebeur met die onderwys personeel nie. Dit beteken in baie gevalle dat die onderwyser nie die taal van die leerder magtig is nie.

Dit is veral problematies in die Grondslag Fase wanneer die onderwyser en leerder nie die selfde taal praat nie en die kommunikasie tussen hulle belemmer word. Dit lei ook tot dissiplinêre probleme a.g.v. 'n gebrek aan kommunikasie.

Die hoofdoel van die empiriese navorsing is om vas te stel of die onderwyser daartoe in staat is om leergeremdhede te identifiseer wat ervaar word deur leerders in 'n eerste addisionele taal in die Grondslag Fase in Graad drie.

Die gevolgtrekking van die navorsing is dat die onderwysers onseker is van die konseptuele velde waarbinne hulle werk en verlang spesifieke riglyne aangaande die toepaslike- inhoud en standaard waarbinne daar geonderrig en geassesseer word.

Onderwysers is nie toegerus met die kennis en kundigheid om leerders met spel- en leerprobleme in die eerste addisionele taal te ondersteun nie. Daarom word dit aanbeveel dat die Departement van Onderwys indiensopleiding moet oorweeg. Hiertydens kan die onderwyser gehelp word om leerders met leerprobleme te ondersteun en om te fokus op voorkomende maatreëls.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT, AIM OF STUDY, METHODOLOGY, CONCEPT DESCRIPTION, LIMITATIONS OF STUDY, AND PROGRAMME OF STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Every child's right to basic education is secured in the South African Constitution. However, what has been done to ensure this right to realize for the most children in South Africa? The rights perspective is a key motivation factor driving the adoption of inclusive education (Muthukrishna *et al.*, 2000:316-317; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:304). According to the Centre for Studies of Inclusive Education (SA, 1996; Topping & Maloney, 2005:23) and stretched by Cheminais (2002:42), "the intention of education in South Africa is that all learners should benefit in a new, inclusive education system"

Nind *et al.* (2005:14-26) state that inclusive education provides a single, integrated system which is able to recognise and respond to the diverse needs of the learner population, irrespective of the learning context. The most influential factor that caused the educational change was the introduction of Outcomes-based Education (OBE) in South Africa. Whilst inclusive education was a radical departure from previous apartheid and special education practices in South Africa, the implementation of OBE required a revolution in thinking about education. In fact, it is OBE that will allow inclusive education to succeed since OBE is inclusive in nature. OBE therefore is the useful vehicle for implementing inclusive education. According to Spady (1994:2), one of the most important features of OBE is that "it establishes the conditions and opportunities, within the system, that enable and encourage all learners to achieve those essential outcomes". OBE is based on a number of premises as identified by Spady (1994:9):

- all learners can succeed but not necessarily on the same day;
- successful learning can result in more successful learning experiences;
- schools can create the space and possibilities for success;

- educators expect all learners to perform optimally.

Naicker (1999:92) further underlines that “certain systemic conditions need to exist for OBE to become a reality. The paradigm shift to inclusive education and OBE cannot take place as a result of one simple decision or a single workshop. This is often the impression one gets at workshops convened to train OBE practitioners”. He also states that “departments of education cannot continue with a new paradigm using an organogram that was appropriate in an old paradigm. They must rather focus on structural changes, for example the immediate location of special education personnel within the mainstream sectors at head office level. These officials must be included in the Foundation Phase (FP), Intermediate Phase (IP) and Senior Phase (SP). The groundwork for inclusive education and OBE now needs to be turned into good practice. Making these changes in practice is an immense challenge for educators” (Naicker, 1999:15).

Appendix A reflects the kind of changes that need to take place, in terms of a totally new vision and understanding (Naicker, 1999:95).

In this inclusive system, learners are able to move from one learning context to another, for example from a formal to a non-formal programme or vice versa (Naicker, 1999:89), or from home language instruction throughout school, to home language education only in the Foundation Phase. According to Matjila and Pretorius (2004:1) the act, Section 3(4) (M) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act 27 of 1996) stipulates that all learners will take at least one approved language as a subject in Grade 1 and 2. From Grade 3 onwards, all learners will take their LoLT (i.e developing their home language together with the additional language which is the LoLT) and at least one additional approved language as subject. Matjila and Pretorius (2004:1) stated further that “the new language policy explicitly promotes an additive approach of bilingualism (LoLT). Given that literacy, specifically reading and writing, forms the backbone of academic achievement, it follows that if the education system is tasked to promote bilingualism, then it is equally tasked to promote biliteracy”.

The official language policy in education was announced by Minister Sibusiso Bengu on 14 July 1997 (1999:38). In doing so, he said, among other things, that... “The new language in education policy is conceived of as an integral and necessary aspect of the

new government's strategy of building a non-racial nation in South Africa. It is meant to facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language and region, while at the same time creating an environment in which respect of languages other than one's own would be encouraged. This approach is in line with the fact that both social and individual multilingualism are the global norm today, especially on the African continent. As such, it assumes that the learning of two or more languages should be general practice and principal in our society. This would certainly counter any particularistic ethnic chauvinism or separatism through mutual understanding. Being multilingual should be a defining characteristic of being South African."

According to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (SA, 2002b:4) the basis for bilingualism and biliteracy is laid out in the OBE approach to education, which forms the basis for the transformed curriculum in South Africa.

The home language Assessment Standards are designed to develop competence especially with regard to various types of literacy (reading, writing, visual and critical literacies). The RNCS Grade R-9 (SA, 2002b:4) states that home language is supposed to provide a strong curriculum to support the language of learning and teaching. Although primary (home) language instruction in the first four years of formal education is encouraged by the education ministry. This is stated by an update report by the Minister of Education Me. Naledi Pandor that the government "will encourage primary (home) language for the first six years but it is not compulsory." (Joubert, 2004:8).

The question of "what is home language?" derived after Pirie (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:219) reports on a study that indicates that many learners in South Africa do not have a single primary language or mother tongue. Children born through inter-marriages are capable to communicate in a number of languages, and according to Brown (1998:12), have "no specific desire to consolidate an identity in any one linguistic group." Makoni (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:219), on the other hand, argues that these children cannot be said to be multi-lingual in the sense that they speak several different languages fluently. He claims that this view of multi-lingualism is constructed through "monolingual lenses" and as "constructed as a series of discrete boxes or as plural monolingualism". Makoni states his argument with "the language spoken by these children (born through inter-marriages) is an amalgam of South African languages with

regional and community variations, and that all the learners in one class probably do not have the same home language as the language of instruction in a specific school". The education situation in South Africa, which requires children to learn through the medium of a single, defined African home language in the Foundation Phase, therefore means that they will probably not *all* be learning through their home language. To state the above, The President's Education Initiative (PEI) report of the Khulisa study (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:218) indicates the extent of the language diversity in South African schools. For example, a school in Johannesburg which formed part of the Khulisa study reported eight official languages of learners in one school, namely Sesotho, Setswana, Venda, Xhosa, Pedi, Zulu, Afrikaans and English. The experiencing of language changes in schools like in the Khulisa study, can be found all over South Africa but specifically in schools in the townships and squatter camps near big towns or cities. The PEI researchers also found (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999) that learners travel long distances (with or without their families) to seek employment and education opportunities. In the Western Cape, the Director General of Education has consistently argued that 25% of the learners in Western Cape schools have migrated from the Eastern Cape. Hoadleys' study (Brown, 1998:9) of four schools in Khayelitsha confirms the widespread migration of learners.

Sigabi's study (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:218) of six Grade 1 classrooms in schools to the north and south of Johannesburg, and Pile and Smythe's study (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:213) of schools in the Free State, found that "In all these classrooms learners spoke a wide range of languages. The increase in the number of additional language learners in our schools means that it is imperative that educators address the issue of how to provide learners of additional languages with opportunities for intellectually, socially and emotionally enriching learning experiences that will also encourage the acquisition and development of the additional language abilities".

In a National Language Project's (NLP's) research report by Brown, Makoni, Murray PRAESA (a Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa) (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:220) and underlined by Alexander (2003:187) they describe yet another language obstacle. It is the drift of Africans to former White schools as a desire for education in the English language. The parents see education in English as a means to social and economic advancement. These parents see English not as a language but as a resource. PRAESA (Project for Alternative Education in South Africa based at the

University of Cape Town) indicates that one of the most dramatic but unplanned consequences of the political changes that took place after the general election in 1994 as far as the education sector was concerned, was the sudden inflow of African language speakers into schools that had previously been open only to learners classified as White or Coloured. In addition to this movement of African learners, there also has been a steady flow of Coloured and Indian learners to schools from which they were previously excluded (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:218).

Because of this inflow of non-mother tongue speakers, South African policy makers and researchers unequivocally support mother tongue instruction for the early years. PRAESA claims that in local and international literature on bilingual and multilingual schooling, there is substantial agreement on the following (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:217):

- the overriding value of the educational use of the primary or home language;
- the pernicious effect of a too early abandoning of the home language as a language of learning and teaching in favour of a language of higher status;
- the cognitive, linguistic, affective and social benefits of bilingual education especially through the additive bilingual model.

Setati (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:220) repeats Brown, Makoni, PRAESA and Murray's (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:220) argument, that township schools are interpreting the exodus of learners to former Model C schools, as "parents' desire for teaching in English". A teacher explained the township schools' decision to then rather adopt English as the language of learning in the school (to retain the learners) as follows: "Ah, most children they go to these schools here, *ama-multiracial*, because you know they think they are doing everything in English. But then here in school, then we are doing it in Zulu and it means we are killing these children. So we decided to meet and change. Actually to apply it practically in class, not to just say we are doing English, we are teaching in English, yet in class we are using Zulu. So we tried to emphasise speaking English more in the class". Setati's study (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:214) also includes the view of six teachers regarding English as the language of learning. These teachers refer to English as -

- an international language;

- the language of assessment;
- a universal language;
- an important tool in learners' progress;
- a communication tool.
- an international language that has influenced attitudes negatively towards using African languages as mediums of teaching and learning (Rassool *et al.*, 2006: 548).

The above has shown that the history in South Africa has led to linguistically complex classes and schools. In addition, because of the perceived benefits of English language proficiency, parents and teachers are opting for English language instruction and the Government of South Africa fully supports education in English as an additional language. The Minister of Education (Rademeyer, 2004:3) stipulates the importance of English as an additional language: "We will look carefully into the education of African languages. If home languages are used with the correct foresight it can be a powerful instrument in education. The importance of African languages in the Foundation Phase must be weighed against the political and economical opportunities in South Africa. It is imperative to be skilful in English. English as an additional language on all levels of education must improve. The aim is to empower learners to use English as both educational and study language after the first three years in school". President Mbeki also supports English as a dream for South Africa's development and modernisation through different programmes on all levels. He underlines (Rademeyer, 2004:1) the necessity of a close relation between language, technology and development, to be able to modernise South Africa. In Mbeki's opinion English is the key language for success. President Mbeki (Rademeyer, 2004:2), however, also warns against a simplistic view of additional language, saying that "in South Africa we are dealing with *'die wet van onbedoelde gevolge.'*" Mbeki also indicated that the education system lets the same children benefit and suffer again, ten years after the beginning of democracy. Mbeki also mentioned that as long as our children cannot achieve the "imported technology system", the development and modernisation programme of South Africa cannot be fulfilled.

Alexander (2003:184) states this by saying..."we cannot repeat often enough the paradoxical fact that the only children in South Africa who are the beneficiaries of mother-tongue education from cradle to university are first language speakers of English and many first-language speakers of Afrikaans." See the Matriculations examination results and drop-out rates which are a link to illiteracy.

This is in line with Giliomee *et al.* (2001:45) that English played a powerful role against Apartheid and has led to an uncritical, unquestioning belief especially amongst middle class groups across the cultural spectrum, in the power of the language over the education, cultural and economic value of indigenous languages. This statement links with Ngugi (Alexander 1999:5) ..."The real aim of colonialism was to control the people's wealth... (but) economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others. For colonialism, this involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orature and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser. The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised." This again links with Rumberger and Livin (1984) and Rumberger (1995), Malcolm (2001), Rasool *et al.*, (2006:536), Alexander (1999:14-15) saying that the notion of the "learning society" espoused by national governments, UNESCO and the OECD countries is increasingly underscored by principles such as worker flexibility, which depend on multiskilling, transferable skills and continuous professional development / skills upgrading. The OECD (Rasool *et al.*, 2006:536) make adjustments in 1989 on micro-economic levels, and institutional dynamics, to enable education to respond more effectively to rapid shifts in skills and qualifications requirements in the labour market. This lead into arguments for societies to strengthen the educational infrastructure and HRD (Human resource development) in relation to technological literacy as well as teaching and management skills. In these circumstances the ideal of mother tongue instruction appears to be receding (in the eyes of the parent) and increasingly difficult to achieve. Related to the statement of President Mbeki above.

Despite the above the the language policy of each school and the choice of language of learning and teaching is left to the School Governing Bodies (SGB). According to the

SA (2002b:4) the Language Learning Area (LLA) is in line with the Department of Education's language-in-education policy (LiEP). This policy gives School Governing Bodies the responsibility of selecting school language policies that are appropriate for their circumstances and in line with the policy of additive multilingualism. Rassool (2004:203) underlines this fact "placing emphasis on reinstating previously subjugated languages, the government has extended powers to school governing bodies to determine the language policy of the school subject to the Constitution, the South African Schools Act (SA, 1996) and provincial law. Thus, multilingualism therefore is a central element in the implementation of education policy within South Africa."

The LLA Statement provides a curriculum that is supportive of whatever decision a school makes. It follows an additive approach to multilingualism:

- all learners learn their home language and at least one additional official language;
- learners become competent in their additional language, while their home language is maintained and developed;
- all learners learn an African language for a minimum of three years by the end of the General Education and Training Band. In some circumstances, it may be learned as a second additional language.

But...

Learning material in all eleven African languages is only available up to Grade 3. Thereafter parents and SGB's must decide in which language their children will be educated – mostly Afrikaans or English. Duncan Hindle, Director General of Education (Rademeyer, 2005:4) and Rassool *et al.* (2006:540) ask the question of "how successfully is this human rights approach. In practice it depends to a significant extent on the availability of adequately skilled language teachers and appropriate teaching resources. This all depends on a significant shift in language attitudes amongst all population groups." Hindle describes how 35 000 Grade 6 learners were tested for the relation between scholastic achievement in an additional language and home language education. In the light of these results, Hindle recommended an opportunity for learners to study, at least in the first three to four years, in their home language. This is difficult to fulfil because the language decision of a school is in the hands of the parents and SGB. Hindle further stated that many parents chose for their children to study in Afrikaans or English. This is stated by Me. Naledi Pandor (Joubert, 2004:8). Hindle

indicates studies that show that if a learner switches to an additional language, it is better to start off in their home language in the FP. The obtaining of important concepts, ideas and thoughts by learners are hindered when switching to an additional language. This is underlined in a study taken by Matjila and Pretorius (2004:2) on Zulu university students who wrote their practical Chemistry examination in Zulu. They performed better than their peers who studied the subject in English.

Alexander (2003:184) also states that "we can call mother-tongue education as not only a valid pedagogical but even as indispensable to teaching as learning, an educational approach which is universally accepted as being the most effective." Driscoll and Frost (1999:12-29) indicated that one of the difficulties for the teacher in the early years of language learning is that the full benefits of knowledge of a language are only experienced once the learners have sufficient knowledge of the language to be able to use it for their own purpose, and that is after the age of 9. This is stated by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981:48). Baker (1997:275) underlines these facts by saying "a second language is added to the first language". This is also the experience of the researcher in this study, who is a Grade 3 teacher of a class of first additional language learners, who are between 8 and 10 years of age, who do not all have Tswana as their home language, which therefore probably functions as their first additional language. Taylor and Vinjevold (1999:216) quote the following African examples in support of early learning in mother tongue:

- in South Nigeria, in an experiment of the continued mother tongue instruction until secondary school, better results were produced in these schools than with early-exit bilingualism;
- studies in Zambia have shown that too early an emphasis on learning through English impairs learners' subsequent learning.

The rhetoric question according to Hindle (Rademeyer, 2005b:4) is: "Why is language policy then in the hands of the parents and SGB's and not in the hands of the Department of Education where by law the learner can get education in his home language?"

The home, first and second additional languages, is approached in different ways in South African education policy (SA, 2002b:4):

- the Home Language Assessment Standards document assumes that learners come to school able to understand and speak their home language or mother tongue language. The Home Language Assessment Standards document supports the development of this competence, especially with regard to the various types of literacy (reading, writing, visual and critical literacy's). The Home Language Assessment Standards document provides a strong curriculum to support the language of learning and teaching, which is mother tongue or first additional language;
- the First Additional Language document assumes that learners do not necessarily have any knowledge of the language of tuition when they arrive at school. Learners are presumed to be able to transfer the literacies they have acquired in their home language to their first additional language. The curriculum starts by developing learners' ability to understand and speak the language. On this foundation, it builds literacy in the first additional language. By the end of Grade 9 these learners should be able to use their home language and first additional language effectively and with confidence for a variety of purposes including learning;
- the Second Additional Language is intended for learners who wish to learn three languages. The third language may be an official South African language or a foreign language which is European or African Ethnic. The Assessment Standards document ensures that learners are able to use the language for general communicative purposes. It assumes that less time will be allocated to learning the second additional language than to home language or first additional language.

The White Paper on Education and training of 1995 and the Department of Education Language in Education Policy of 1997, as well as subsequent legislation, place no obligation on schools to offer particular languages, but encourages schools which are "willing and able, to offer more than one language medium in order to accommodate parental or learners' preferences".

The Department of Education's LiEP (SA, 1998b) sees the monitoring of the implementation of its LiEP as a "constitutional obligation", and has proposed an implementation plan to monitor the implementation of policy by the provinces. This plan includes -

- obtaining relevant information from provincial officials and schools;
- appointing provincial language managers;
- promoting inter-provincial cooperation with these managers;
- initiating collaboration with Pan South African Language Board;
- redressing and developing of previously marginalised indigenous languages;
- establishing national committees for each of the official languages.

According to Taylor and Vinjevold (1999:213) research indicates that, in general, schools have not developed language policies in these terms. None of the Western Cape schools in the one study had "consciously aligned their language plans, policies and practices with the LiEP, which by the stage had been made public for more than a year" (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:32). Brown's study in 1998 (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:213) of schools in KwaZulu Natal found that schools had made recent ad hoc decisions on language policy, but that none of these decisions constituted a formal school level language policy as stipulated in the South African Schools Act of 1996. Pile and Smythe's study (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:213) in Free State schools indicates that in seven of the eight schools in their study, there was no language policy in line with government requirements, but that parents had voted on the language of learning, usually by a show of hands at a specially convened meeting. Four schools voted for English as medium of instruction from Grade 1, and the other three for Sotho in the Foundation Phase and then English.

The above indicated that although schools have not developed new language policies in line with the requirements of the South African Schools Act of 1996, they have relating de facto policies. Sigabi (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:218) found evidence of staff language proficiency determining language policy in a school situated in a peri-urban area. Learners from at least five language groups – Zulu, Setswana, Tsonga, North Sotho, Ndebele and South Sotho – were accommodated in a particular Grade. These learners were divided into two main language groups – Zulu and Tswana – because the

educating staff “Do not command the other languages”. Sigabi’s study in Gauteng confirms these facts. For example, in a Grade 1 class, Sigabi found that educators used one of the African languages as the language of learning and teaching, but English was extensively used and encouraged.

However, in the teaching of an additional language, according to the SA (2002c:5) it is recommended that the learners’ home language should still be used for learning and teaching wherever possible (LoLT). This is particularly important in the Foundation Phase where learners learn to read and write, and where at the same time they have to make a transition from their home language to an additional language of learning and teaching. The transition to the additional language should therefore be carefully planned and executed as follows (SA, 2002c:5):

- the additional language should be introduced as a subject in Grade 1 already;
- the home language tuition should continue to be used alongside the additional language for as long as possible(LoLT);
- when learners enter a school where the language of learning and teaching is an additional language for the learner, teachers and other educators should make provision for special assistance and supplementary learning of the additional language, until such time as the learner is able to learn effectively in the language of learning and teaching.

It is the researcher’s opinion that the rapid changes in the linguistic profile of schools were, however, not accompanied by changes in the teaching staff. This has meant that in many classes the teachers still employed in those positions, may not be able to speak the language of a significant number of their learners. This is particularly problematic in the Foundation Phase, because where the teacher and the learners do not speak the same language; the communication between them will be stunted. This may result in a further barrier in the sense that learning difficulties may arise from the communication breakdown between teachers and learners who speak different languages. Dewey wrote almost half a century ago about the importance of communication between teacher and learners. How relevant it is, because of the gap between home and school culture

To state the above Taylor and Vinjevold (1999:139) point out the low levels of teachers' conceptual knowledge. Teachers have a poor grasp of their subjects which are noticeable in their content and conceptual presentation of their lessons. The teachers, however, were not receptive to these errors when pointed out to them. Teachers low level of reading skills are also pointed out as a part of the poor lesson presentation. Teachers readily admitted in focus groups that they themselves do not like to read (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:vi), and asked for practical classroom demonstrations – live or video – of actual lesson plans and practical support materials (Rassool *et al.*, 2006:546,549).

Because of a lack of reading skills among the teachers, the knowledge that they teach is therefore only transferred from the textbook to the learner (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:146). Classroom observations Schollar (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:151) revealed that because of this lack of reading by teachers, learners are given little opportunity to read because reading is not important to the teacher. Only 4% of lesson time was spent on reading. Duncan (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:151) reiterates this observation is stated by Matjila and Pretorius (2004:17-18). In the schools where Duncan did the research, the reading episodes occurred haphazardly at intervals throughout the lesson, and were subordinated to the overall content of the whole lesson. Duncan (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:151) comes to the conclusion that "South African schools have submerged initial reading instruction in the general melee of Foundation Phases activities". According to Duncan this may have more to do with teacher competence and classroom management than pedagogical theory. In any event, "the teaching of reading in these classes seemed to be incidental and sporadic rather than a principal focus and outcome of the lesson". This link with Schlebusch and Thobedi (2005:312) in a study undertaken in the Free State province on township schools in the Lejweleputswa District.

A study undertaken by the Gauteng Education and Training Council reports an alarming opinion expressed by the teachers, reflecting a deep confusion amongst teachers as to exactly what they should be teaching: "A very worrying observation that has been made in the schools over the last few months is that teachers keep on asking whether they need to be teaching reading and writing. By the end of the Foundation Phase, many learners have still not been taught how to read. This is partly because teachers themselves do not know how to teach reading and this is being exacerbated by the fact

that teachers think they do not have to teach reading” (Alexander, 1999:13; Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:158). To quote but only one author “many teachers use a broad, comprehensive and inclusive approach to literacy development. They do not solely focus on functional literacy nor on critical literacy but attempt to develop different kinds of literacy. Many try to facilitate a varied use of reading and writing in their children, to develop independent readers and writers who are both skilled in language usage (this includes correct spelling and grammar) and who can also write creatively, critically, imaginatively, reflectively and for enjoyment”. (Baker, 1997:315).

A study undertaken by the Gauteng Institute for Curriculum Development (GICD) to evaluate the progress of Curriculum 2005 in the Gauteng province, learners performed moderately well on low-level skills such as verbal and story comprehension, (BICS, Basis Interpersonal Communication Skills) but below average in areas like reasoning, written comprehension and language structure in communication, (CALP, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2005:309; Matjila & Pretorius, 2004:3; Nieman & Monyai, 2006:80-81; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981:111-114).

Written work comprised a very small proportion of most lessons. It was largely confined to simple exercises at the end of a lesson. Often only one-word answers were required. More varied written exercises were few and far between: these were written on the board for pupils to copy (as single words), and functioned most often as vocabulary exercises. “Often it appeared that learners copied these exercises with little comprehension, and that this was exacerbated by the fact that the information was often decontextualised. Learners were never required to write extended pieces; even whole sentences were rare. As a result, learners’ exercise books contained very little, and the content usually consists of isolated words, showing little or no logic. Not only are their reading and writing abilities severely stunted by these practices, but pupils are left with no written record of the year’s work.” (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:152). This findings link with Schlebusch and Thobedi study in the Lejweleputswa District in the Free State (2005:314,321). Willig (1990:25) states the importance of writing in school by saying “writing is a key element in the search of meaning because it allows us to reflect on and order our encounters with the world and the impact they make upon us. Equally important, we write to share thoughts and feelings with others through communications ranging from hastily written notes to formal, carefully argued essays on complex issues”. Baker (1999:318) underlines the above by stating that an important form of

writing is when text is treated, as a tentative and provisional attempt to capture current understanding. This again can provoke further attempts at understanding as the writer or some other reader interact with the text, to interpret and reinterpret its meaning. The writer are constantly asking whether the text is making sense in relation to their own experience. In writing, one assesses what one knows already, what one needs to find out more, what is unknown, what needs to be selected as relevant and pertinent, how to organise and express ideas in a form that is most appropriate for understanding by the intended audience. Writing is empowering (Baker, 1997:318).

Discipline problems are also very much in evidence in several schools because of a communication breakdown, teacher competence and classroom management. Teachers are forced to spend an inordinate amount of time controlling the learners. In this situation teachers become "little more than the crowd-controllers" (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:16), e.g. in one school the PRAESA study found that the teacher spent one-quarter of the time reprimanding the learners. Even when assistants are present both teacher and assistant are involved in reprimanding the learners, and the researchers report that the effect is one of "constant interruption to the lesson flow requiring a special type of concentration to overcome" (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:17). According to the researchers in the PRAESA study, these problems derive from the teachers' diminished authority over their charges at a time when they literally do not speak the same language. This can be stated by a study undertaken by Oosthuizen, *et al.* (2006) in a region of the North-West Province on the frequency of the discipline problems with educators. Another encumbering result of this mismatch situation is that it also affects teachers' methodology: teachers faced with learners who understand very little of what they say, "resort to teacher-centred lessons in which learners are seldom given the chance to initiate something" (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:16). To state the above from a study of Schlebusch and Thobedi (2005:314) on the direct influence of the OBE approach on the teaching and learning process in Grade 8 English First Additional Language (EFAL) teachers responded ..."Sometimes learners respond to questions asked on the chalkboard. Educators seemed to believe that these opportunities were enough for their learners." Or teachers were inclined to tell learners what to do rather than showing them skills on how to apply new tasks. The aspect of teacher methodology is encumbering because OBE encourage a paradigm shift from teacher-centred to learners-centred. According to Hartas (2005:77-78) communication attempts

should be taken very seriously, even if they are incomplete or the language used is not accurate.

Some schools are adopting a variety of OBE methodology strategies to assist African learners to learn English and to adjust to this language as a medium of instruction, where English is not the learners' mother tongue. Some schools have introduced bridging classes for non-English speakers, while others have employed African speakers as assistant teachers.

It is the researcher's opinion that bridging classes and assistant teachers can also be applied in the Foundation Phase in schools where the language of instruction is not necessarily English, but any language *other* than the learners' mother tongue, which implies that it may be in any of the other African languages. For instance, in the school where this research was performed, where Tswana is the language of teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase, bridging classes can be provided for the learners whose mother tongue is not Tswana. This can be supported by the PRAESA study where the presence of an assistant has improved communication between teachers and learners, and has "taken the edge off discipline problems resulting from the communication breakdown" (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:21). This, however, implies that the assistant will have to be fluent in all the home languages spoken by the learners in such a class, and that all these languages will have to be used on a daily basis, to be able to effectively explain the teacher's instructions to all the learners in that class. The teacher in the study who had the support of the assistant, also claims that the presence of such an assistant who provides translation enables her to distinguish between language difficulties and learning difficulties.

An alternative approach to using teacher assistants is for teachers to learn the African language which is dominant in the schools where they teach. Murray (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:223) found that teachers who participated in an African language course experienced an improvement in teacher-learner relationships and improved communication in the classroom.

It would seem that pre- and in-service programmes must teach and deepen conceptual knowledge and higher order skills in all learning areas for both primary and high school teachers (CALP). It would appear that, without this foundation, teachers, development

programmes on curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and the construction and / or use of learning materials, will have little effect (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999 232).

Because of the above, the President's Education Initiative (PEI), was born already in 1996. President Mandela appealed to the international community to assist South Africa with the reskilling and support of educators. Against this background the PEI was established and the following were identified as critical areas for which international assistance should be sought:

- the upgrading and reskilling of serving teachers in science and mathematics and technology;
- the improvement of the quality of education in schools, including the improvement of teaching in large classes, in multi-Grade classes in small farm schools, and in a multilingual environment;
- in-service as well as pre-service training in Inclusive Education, to attain the above.

Nineteen countries expressed an interest in the initiative, and in November 1996 the Joint Education Trust (JET) was appointed by the National Department of Education to co-ordinate the first phase of the project (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:3).

Teacher development is in fact recommended and supported, if not prescribed, by the policy regarding the development of the professional teaching qualities of every teacher, in the White Paper No 6 on Special Needs Education (SA, 2001:49): "We will require that all curriculum development, assessment and instructional development programmes make special effort to address the learning and teaching requirements of the diverse range of learning needs, and that they address barriers to learning that arise from language and the medium of instruction; teaching style and pace; time frames of the completion of curricula; learning support materials and equipment; and assessment methods and techniques".

Part of the development of such support systems for learners who experience barriers to learning, is the description in White Paper 6 (SA, 2001:48) of how *full-service schools* will be established in thirty designated primary schools: "Initially full-service schools will be provided with the necessary physical, material and human resources and

professional development of staff so that they can accommodate the diverse range of learning needs.” The White Paper (SA, 2001:48) furthermore distinguishes between full-service, ordinary and special schools: “In an inclusive education and training system, a wider spread of educational support services will be created in line with what learners with disabilities require. This means that learners who require low-intensive support will receive this in ordinary schools and those who require moderate support will receive this in full-service schools. Learners who require high-intensive educational support will continue to receive such support in special schools.” This implies that the diversity of learners who experience barriers to learning has to be accommodated by all teachers within their classes, in terms of the assessment and support of all possible barriers to learning that learners may experience inter alia in the Foundation Phase in any of the three indicated Learning Programmes – Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills. According to the RNCS (SA, 2002b:7) teachers in the Foundation Phase must be equipped to identify and to support learners who experience barriers to learning.

In this study the focus will be on the identification of spelling difficulties experienced by learners in the Foundation Phase, in Tswana, which is an additional language for many learners in the schools in the sample of the study. The additional language spelling difficulties they experience can therefore be made applicable to any other additional language in any other school, because the nature of such spelling difficulties will be the same in any of the additional languages, and their needs will also be the same in terms of additional support they require in the instruction of the additional language by the educators. For the purpose of this study, that is also the reason why literature on English as an additional language is consulted for the description and identification of spelling difficulties, as described in chapter 3. This research is also envisaged to lead to the development of in- and pre-service training programmes for Foundation Phase teachers.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to the RNCS (SA, 2002b:8) educators of Foundation Phase learners should be capable of identifying difficulties and barriers to learning. In the light of the above discussion, the main problem statement for this study can be formulated as follows:

What are educators' knowledge in the identification, assessment and support of spelling difficulties of Grade three learners with Tswana as medium of instruction, which is not necessarily their home language?

From this main question, the following sub-questions can be derived:

- What kind of difficulties do learners in Grade 3 experience in terms of literacy, specifically spelling?
- What is Grade 3 educators' knowledge of spelling difficulties?
- How do Grade 3 educators identify and support spelling difficulties?

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to establish what is the knowledge of Foundation Phase educators in the North-West Province concerning the identification and support of spelling difficulties, specifically in terms of the following:

- the educators' knowledge of spelling difficulties learners may experience in the Foundation Phase;
- educators' skill in the identification of these difficulties as they manifest in learners' learning behaviour in the Foundation Phase;
- knowledge about assessment and support procedures and techniques for the assessment of these difficulties.

The potential contribution of this research lies in the fact that specifically Foundation Phase educators' knowledge and skill in the identification and support of spelling difficulties will be greatly enhanced through the envisaged in-service teacher-training programme, which is aimed at eventual implementation throughout South Africa. The envisaged training programme is in line with the White Paper No. 6 (SA, 2001:27-28) to promote human resource development in the support of barriers to learning, and ultimately for the successful establishment of the inclusive and education system: "Professional development programmes will focus on the development of effective programme implementation and the development of competencies in the Governance and in the policy necessary for addressing severe learning difficulties within all branches and sections of the national and provincial department of education". This study will specifically focus on first additional language spelling difficulties experienced by the

Grade 3 learner with Tswana as medium as instruction, which is not necessarily their home language. The study links with the National Education Policy Act (1996), which requires ordinary public schools to admit learners who experience barriers to learning as far as possible, so as to be accommodated in an inclusive education setting. The success of inclusive education depends on the efficacy of in-service training of Foundation Phase educators in the identification of barriers to learning and spelling in the Foundation Phase.

This study forms part of a greater research project aimed at establishing Foundation Phase educators' knowledge and skill in the identification and support of barriers to learning, and ultimately to develop in-service training. As envisaged by the White Paper No 6 (SA, 2001:49-50) "the norms and standards for teacher education will be revised where appropriate to include the development of competencies to recognize and address barriers to learning and to accommodate the diverse range of learning needs."

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 Research design

The empirical part of the research is qualitative because the aim of the study is to provide an in-depth description of the identification of spelling difficulties by a sample of Foundation Phase educators. The qualitative descriptions are embedded in the results described in a questionnaire as obtained from a video (see 4.2) containing footage of an authentic classroom situation, where a Grade 3 educator is presenting a lesson in language, reading and spelling. The results from the questionnaires are the perspectives of Grade 3 educators who viewed the video and thereafter completed the questionnaire. The questions in the questionnaire are exploratory (open) about a natural field setting, namely the classroom.

The literature part of the research is also qualitative in nature, as it contains a description of theory on the identification and support of spelling difficulties, as presented in chapter 3. The data for chapter 2 is obtained from documentary sources on the education dispensation in South Africa in the Foundation Phase. The limitations of qualitative research are that the data collected and analysed can be very time-

consuming, and that the main source of error can be the potential bias of the researcher.

1.4.2 Measuring instrument

For this qualitative research an open questionnaire is used as the measuring instrument. The questionnaire is based on a video which contains footage of a Grade 3 learner who is experiencing language and spelling difficulties within the classroom situation. The questionnaire is also based on the data acquired from the literature study as discussed in chapter 3, on the identification and support of spelling difficulties in the Foundation Phase.

A questionnaire is described by Gall *et al.* (2003:222) as a document that poses the same questions to all participants and can act as a guideline on how to answer the given questions. The participants issue a written response to every question. Participants may also decide to leave certain questions unanswered. According to Delport (2002:17) and Gall *et al.* (2003:295), a questionnaire may comprise of open and closed questions. For qualitative research questions a questionnaire generally is open-ended to give participants the opportunity to express their own experiences and observations.

The questionnaires and videos in this study are presented to educators who teach in Tswana which supposedly is the home language of the specific community (Potchefstroom district), but which often is a first additional language of the learners who attend that school. The questionnaire used in this study comprises open questions concerning the identification of language and spelling difficulties in oral and written work, experienced by a Grade 3 learner in Tswana, which presumably is a first additional language for the learners in these schools, because the learners come from Tswana as well as Zulu and even Afrikaans homes.

1.4.3 Population and target groups

The population is all Grade 3 learners taught in Tswana in the North-West Province, which is probably their first additional language. The sample consists of schools in the Potchefstroom area with Tswana as the medium of instruction, as the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University is situated in Potchefstroom, and the selected

schools are nearby and willing to participate. The sample may therefore be called a convenient sample, as the participants were accessible, available and willing to participate.

The sample meets the standardised criteria for representativeness, in terms of rural and urban areas (learners from the nearby rural areas also attend these inner-city schools together with the learners living in the neighbourhood of the schools), the literacy level of learners (many parents in the community are illiterate), population groups (boys and girls), and language groups (Tswana as home and first additional language).

1.4.4 Implementation and analysis of the empirical research

The questionnaires and videos were delivered by the researcher to the different schools, and were collected personally as well. Written and oral reading and spelling difficulties experienced by the learner on the video had to be identified and described in the questionnaire by the educators. The data obtained from the filled-in questionnaires were then analysed qualitatively in terms of themes emerging from the answers, concerning the identification and support of spelling difficulties experienced by the learner on the video. The data can be generalised to all learners who experience spelling difficulties in Tswana in Grade 3, for whom Tswana probably is their first additional language.

1.4.5 Limitations of the empirical research

The results of this study are representative only of the schools in the sample, and not of all Grade 3 educators in the North-West Province.

A main source of potential bias by the researcher is that the researcher herself is a Grade 3 educator in a school with Tswana as medium of instruction, where the learners also experience spelling difficulties because Tswana is the first additional language of some of these learners. Her possible sympathetic stance towards such learners, may have biased her towards negative findings in terms of the educators in the sample displaying deficient knowledge and identification of spelling difficulties.

1.5 CONCEPT DESCRIPTION

1.5.1 Spelling and spelling difficulties

At the simplest level spelling is the association of alphabetic symbols, called graphemes, with speech sounds, called phonemes (the smallest identifiable sounds in speech) (Montgomery, 1997:1). Spelling difficulties can therefore be described as difficulties experienced with the association of graphemes and phonemes, in written work. Literacy can be described as the ability to read and write. In this study spelling difficulties will also be referred to as literacy or language difficulties.

1.5.2 Identification of difficulties

Recognition of difficulties according to their defining characteristics and the description thereof, either in oral or written terms, requiring learner support for such difficulties.

1.5.3 Learner Support

When learners experience any difficulty in any school phase, they are entitled to extra instruction and support, if they are to overcome the particular difficulty or barrier they experience (Donald *et al.*, 2002:321). In this study the focus is on the identification and support of spelling difficulties experienced by learners in Grade 3.

1.5.4 Foundation Phase

The first phase of the General Education and Training Band (Grade R, 1, 2 and 3). This phase focuses on learners' literacy, numeracy and life skills (SA, 2002a:9). This is the phase where learners consolidate their ability to read and write in their home language or additional language. The ages of learners in this phase vary between six and nine years.

1.5.5 Grade 3

Learners in this Grade usually are between the ages of approximately eight to nine years. Grade 3 is the end of the Foundation Phase, where learners have to be assessed for promotion to the Intermediate Phase.

1.5.6 Home language:

The language spoken at the home where the learner lives. It is usually the mother tongue of the learner. Home Language in the Foundation Phase is supposed to be the mother tongue of the learners.

1.5.7 First Additional Language

This is the medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase, but which is not necessarily the home language of the learners in that class.

1.6 PROGRAMME OF THE STUDY

- Chapter 1: Introduction, statement the problem, aims of the study, methodology, concept description, and programme of the study.
- Chapter 2: Literature overview: the education dispensation in South Africa in the literacy learning area in the Foundation Phase.
- Chapter 3: Literature overview: Language and spelling development, identification of spelling difficulties and the assessment and support thereof.
- Chapter 4: Empirical investigation and results.
- Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

THE EDUCATIONAL DISPENSATION IN THE LITERACY LEARNING AREA IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I refer to the RNCS as it is presented by the Department of Education to educators. It is assumed by the researcher that the educators bear knowledge of the RNCS. This is also assumed for the empirical study in chapter 4 to enable the educators to answer the assessment questions and to identify the symptoms of the learners with difficulties on the video.

In totality chapter 2 is presented with the assumption that educators have pre-knowledge of the RNCS. The same applies to chapter 4.

The purpose of the empirical study was not to test the understanding of the RNCS, therefore no questions were asked relating the RNCS. No opinion is therefore expressed regarding the RNCS because the intention was not to invite a debate with regards to the RNCS.

The RNCS has been implemented in schools by means of Learning Programmes. Learning Programmes are structured, systematic arrangements of activities that promote the attainment of the specified Learning Outcomes and the Assessment Standards for each phase (SA, 2002b:1). A Learning Outcome is a description of what knowledge, skills and values learners should have, demonstrate and be able to do at the end of a phase. The Learning Outcomes do not prescribe content or method (SA, 2002b:14). The Assessment Standards describe the level at which learners should demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes and the way of demonstrating their achievements. The Assessment Standards are Grade specific and show how conceptual progression will occur in a Learning Area. A Learning Outcome is different from an Assessment Standard in the way that a Learning Outcome can, and does in most cases, remain the same from Grade to Grade, while Assessment Standards change from Grade to Grade (SA, 2002b:14).

There are eight Learning Programmes in the RNCS, and they form the foundation of the RNCS. Three of these Learning Programmes are implemented in the Foundation Phase. They are Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills (SA, 2003:27). For the purpose of this study, only the Literacy Learning Area will be focussed on, as this is the Area where spelling is accommodated.

In this chapter I will discuss the educational dispensation in the Foundation Phase (FP) in South Africa regarding language and literacy learning, and the assessment and support of literacy difficulties.

2.2 LANGUAGE AND LITERACY LEARNING

Literacy is referred to as “the ability to read and use written information and to write for different purposes” (SA, 2002c:139). Literacy is also part of a general ability to make sense of one’s world. Literacy covers all 11 official languages, as both Home and First Additional Languages for the FP, to make provision for the rich language diversity in South Africa. Literacy is the medium through which all other learning takes place (SA, 2003:21). Young learners begin their literacy development from their first interaction with reading, writing, print and audio-visual media in the environment in which they grow up. Literacy development involves a gradual process of improving various language-related skills. Mistakes should be viewed as a natural part of the learning process. Learners’ literacy skills will become accomplished when they are given the opportunities to use and develop it (SA, 2002c:50). In a multilingual country like South Africa it is important that learners reach high levels of proficiency in at least two languages and that they are able to communicate in other languages (SA, 2002c:20).

The Language and Literacy Programme (LLP) in the FP has its main focus on language acquisition and language development, and various kinds of communication for both Home Language and First Additional Language. The LLP helps learners develop skills, knowledge, values and attitudes, and enables learners to communicate effectively in spoken or written/visual format (SA, 2003:24). Literacy stresses the issue of access to the world, to knowledge and to making sense of our worlds through whatever means we have but not only through texts and books (SA, 2003:41). In the LLP the following kinds of literacy appear as examples of literacy in the Foundation Phase Policy Document (October 1997):

- cultural literacy: Cultural, social and ideological values that shape our reading of texts;
- critical literacy: the ability to respond critically to the intentions, contents and possible effects of messages and texts on the reader;
- visual literacy: the interpretation of images, signs, pictures and non-verbal (body) languages;
- media literacy: the 'reading' of e.g. TV and film as cultural messages;
- numerical literacy: the ability to use and interpret numbers;
- computer literacy: the ability to use and access information from computers.

The LLP covers all official languages as either Home Language, First Additional Language, or Second Additional Language. Learners' home language should be used for learning and teaching whenever possible. This is particularly important in the FP where learners learn to read and write. The LLP follows an additive or incremental approach to multilingualism, described as follows (SA, 2003:41):

- all learners learn their home language and at least one additional official language;
- learners become competent in their additional language, while their home language is maintained and developed.

In the LLP the outcomes to be achieved are the following:

1. Listening: the learner is able to listen for information and enjoyment, and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations.
2. Speaking: the learner is able to communicate confidently and effectively in a spoken language in a wide range of situations.
3. Reading and Viewing: the learner is able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts.
4. Writing: the learner is able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes.
5. Thinking and Reasoning: the learner is able to use language to think and reason, and access, process and use information for learning.
6. Language Structure and Use: the learner knows and is able to use the sounds, words and the grammar of a language to create and interpret texts.

All six Language Learning Outcomes are equally important as one cannot achieve one without the others. When we use language, we integrate knowledge, skills and values to express ourselves. A central principal of the Language Learning Area Statement is therefore the integration of knowledge, skills and values through the creation and interpretation of oral, written or visual texts. Learning Outcomes 1 and 2 (Listening and Speaking) are always grouped together, Learning Outcomes 3 and 4 (Reading and viewing, and Writing) are often linked, while Learning Outcomes 5 and 6 (Thinking and Reasoning, and Language Structure and Use) are integrated, to provide the knowledge base without which the first four Learning Outcomes would make no sense (SA, 2003:47). This means that Reading and Writing, Listening and Speaking, Thinking and Reasoning, and Language Structure and Use, can be integrated through the use of text, which in turn links Literacy with other Learning Programmes. The learner could e.g. read and view a picture book on animal or food types, which can form a link with the Natural Science and/or Life Skills Learning Areas (SA, 2003:48).

The above learning outcomes are to be assessed by way of the Assessment Standards for each outcome. The LLP has six outcomes, described above, along with their related Assessment Standards (SA, 2002c:20; SA, 2003:42). The Assessment Standards are the stepping-stones required to demonstrate the achievement of the outcomes (SA, 2003:47).

Below follows a comparison between the Assessment Standards for Learning Outcome 4 (Writing) in the Home and in the First Additional Language Learning Areas respectively according to Eloff, Loots and Meij (2003:v-xii).

The Standard Assessments for **Home Language** are as follows:

We know this outcome has been achieved when the learner –

1. uses pre-writing strategies to initiate writing:
 - * uses pre-writing strategies to gather information and choose a topic (e.g. brainstorming, free writing, talking with friends, visual images);
 - * begins to plan writing;
2. drafts a piece of writing for different purposes:

- * selects a text form to suit the purpose and audience (e.g. diary entry to record feelings about an event);
 - * writes a selection of short texts for different purposes (e.g. one or two paragraph stories, simple book reviews, recipes, letters, dialogues, instructions);
 - * where appropriate, writes a title that reflects the content;
3. revises own writing:
- * discusses own and others' writing to get or give feedback;
 - * edits own writing (e.g. deleting or adding words to clarify meaning, re-ordering sentences, checking and correcting spelling and punctuation);
 - * revises own writing after getting feedback from others;
4. "publishes" (make public) own writing:
- * shares work with others by reading it aloud and/or displaying it in the classroom;
 - * shares writing with intended audience, such as family or friends (e.g. letters, messages, instructions);
 - * makes own books or contributes to class anthologies;
5. builds vocabulary and spells words independently:
- * varies vocabulary for interest and specific purposes;
 - * experiments with and manipulates words from stories, reading, media, jokes, oral languages of friends and others;
 - * builds word bank and personal dictionaries;
 - * uses dictionary to check spelling and meaning of words;
 - * uses knowledge of phonic and spelling rules to write unfamiliar words;
6. uses appropriate grammatical structures and writing conventions:
- * begins to group sentences into paragraphs;
 - * uses punctuation appropriately (e.g. capital letters, full stops, question marks, commas, apostrophes, exclamation marks);
 - * applies knowledge of grammar;
 - * uses knowledge of other texts as models of writing;
 - * uses narrative structure;
 - * uses informational text structures, such as experiments;

7. writes legibly:
 - * writes with ease and increasing speed as a result of frequent practice;
 - * completes a writing task within a set time.

The assessment standards for **First Additional Language** are as follows:

We know this outcome has been achieved, when the learner –

1. writes individual words such as 'sit';
2. enters words in a personal dictionary;
3. spells common words correctly;
4. writes lists and give its headings (insects, ants, bees, butterflies);
5. writes sentences by using a frame (I can.....);
6. writes own sentences without a frame (expressing feelings and personal opinions);
7. uses punctuation – commas, question marks and exclamation marks);
8. sequences and copies sentences to make a paragraph;
9. writes short formulaic text (invitations or greetings cards);
10. with support, writes a short dialogue;
11. uses a frame writes a simple recount (Yesterday, I... Then I...).

The LLP should help learners discover and use techniques and strategies to learn to read and write by showing the learner how to unlock the 'code' of written words or symbols (SA, 2003:51), in terms of:

- phonemic awareness (sensitive towards the sounds of a language);
- phonics (knowledge of letter-sound correspondence);
- putting together two or three letters to make one sound (knowledge of blends).

The LLP helps learners develop the skill, knowledge, values and attitudes embodied in the Critical and Developmental Outcomes (SA, 2003:42). The main purpose of the LLP is to enable learners to communicate effectively either in spoken or written/visual format

as reflected by the Learning Outcomes in the SA(2003:42). Through the LLP learners will be able to -

- process information: learners are provided with opportunities to comprehend and respond to a range of texts, including both print and non-media;
- communicate ideas and information: manage and exchange ideas and to communicate these with precision, clarity and creativity;
- establish relationships between self and society: to develop and understand themselves and their world by becoming aware of how people use language for various purposes such as working in the school and community;
- access information: access to information, life long learning and work opportunities;
- creative expression and performance presentation: allows learners to experience themselves through various art forms and to develop their ability to express their creative thoughts and ideas.

The time allocation for the LLP in the FP has been determined as 40%. The FP educators should develop the LLP jointly as a team and reflect on its appropriateness and effectiveness regularly, as an LLP is not fixed for all times (SA, 2003:51,52).

In the above section the outcomes for Writing were described. In the next section the assessment approach as prescribed by the RNCS will be described.

2.3 ASSESSMENT IN THE LLP

A central characteristic of assessment is that educators have to give learners continuous feedback during the learning process. This implies a variety of assessment activities. Two factors determine the form of assessment (Naicker, 1999:112):

1. learners learn in a variety of ways. Assessment should therefore be structured to allow for the differences in learners' styles and for responses in different modalities (writing, signing, drawing, speaking, and etcetera);
2. the type of assessment depends on the outcome of the lesson (oral presentations, practical activities, reports, research or tests). This helps learners to learn and to improve their competencies.

Naicker (1999:113) also provides a framework of OBE assessment strategies (see Table 2).

TABLE 1: FRAMEWORK OF OBE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

Example	Description	Advantages
Group Projects	A number of learners work on a task together. This might require planning, research, discussion and group presentation.	One can assess learners' abilities to work as a team and to complete the task competently. This method facilitates co-operation between learners.
Interviews and oral presentations	Learners present work that they have researched, orally to the educator/other learners	It allows learners to tell educators what they know. Both the work completed and the ability to communicate what has been learnt can be assessed.
Written assignments	E.g. an essay. These assignments involve description, analysis, explanation and summary.	Can be used to assess a learner's understanding of an issue. This method can show how learners use facts and how they structure these coherently into arguments. In addition, they can demonstrate learners' thinking, writing and communication skills.
Peer - assessment	Learners give their own opinion of their group's performance compared to	Learners are involved in the assessment process and not threatened by it. They

	the outcomes they should have demonstrated. Learners assess what other learners have done.	are more likely to learn from this process.
Practical assignments	E.g. scientific experiments, building models, drawing a map of the community, etc.	Demonstrates how well learners understand specific concepts and how they translate these into practical implementation.
Portfolio assessment	These are files or folders that contain the best work the learner has done over a period of time, as well as initial plans, drafts, self evaluation and feedback from peers and teachers.	Allows for assessment over a period of time. Learners are not assessed on a once-off performance. Including self-assessment.
Self-assessment	Learners are asked to assess themselves against the given outcomes.	Learners begin to recognise the possibilities and limitations of their work. They are involved in the process, understand it and are more likely to learn from it.

This framework for assessment is flexible and creates opportunities for all learners to achieve success relative to their own pace and style of learning. Time can be adjusted for faster and slower learners on the basis of the following considerations (Naicker, 1999:113):

1. Teaching time: involves the direct support provided to learners.

2. Learning time: is concerned with the amount of time the system allows for learners to learn prior to indicating to them that they have exhausted the time allocated for learning.
3. Learners' eligibility: regards the time allocated to learn different curriculum components. A learner becomes eligible for more time to master curriculum components when learning breakdown has been experienced.

All three aspects of time can be adjusted to meet the needs of learners who progress slower or faster than others. In every phase as well as the FP, a learner can use the entire phase to meet the required outcomes at the end of the phase, instead of being tested after each Grade, only to be allocated to a support class without realistic support being in place for that learner.

Donald *et al.* (1997:18), Burden (2000:29) and Le Grange and Reddy (1996:11), all summarise the difference between assessment in the "old" curriculum (before democracy) and Curriculum 2005 as revised in the RNCS, as follows:

TABLE 2: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE "OLD" CURRICULUM AND CURRICULUM 2005

Old curriculum	Curriculum 2005
Test and exam driven in formal settings.	Made up of a variety of assessment methods, that can be formal and informal.
Takes place after the learning process, at dates and time previously decided on. (Summative).	Is used to inform the teaching and learning process. Takes place during the learning process, and when it is considered necessary. (Formative).
Textbook bound.	Parents have more rights and responsibilities within the school.
Teacher centred.	Learner and learning centred.
Fragmented. Provides isolated marks or percentages to show how learners have changed.	Provides information in context as feedback on how learners are changing.
Content based.	Competency based.

Knowledge based.

Mostly norm-referenced rather than a criterion-referenced.

Rigid curriculum.

Life long learning based.

Uses criterion referencing. Learners are not compared with others but are assessed in comparison to their own previous performance.

Flexible curriculum.

The construction of assessment instruments in any country must take account of at least four dimensions (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:189):

1. Content: any assessment instrument will target a specific set of content topics at a level of complexity appropriate to the learners.
2. Task: most learners find it easier to answer questions regarding the literal understanding of a written passage than to make inference or give a critical analysis of the same passage.
3. Experience of the learner: the learner who has exhibited facility in the manipulation of for example four-digit numbers (thousands) is likely to cope with problems involving five-digit numbers (ten-thousand) far more easily than one who barely learnt to count.
4. Culture: this includes the range of variables which characterise the background of learners, such as socio-economic status, language and ethnicity. The kind of standardised assessment tests used in the past in South Africa has been criticised for cultural bias.

In the South African context the above four dimensions are not problem-free. Regarding learner experience for example, most schooling systems in other countries assume a correlation between the age of learners and their knowledge and experiences. This enables standard assessment to be set at each Grade level. The South African Department of Education (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:190) also states that in the main, learners are expected to progress according to age. However, due to lack of similar or comparable experiences, the RNCS makes provision for learners in South Africa to progress at their own rate and age, within each phase, and learners are only assessed against the expected outcomes for a phase, at the end of that phase.

Regarding the content and task dimensions above, many teachers in South Africa are unsure of the conceptual fields in which they work, and require specified guidance concerning the appropriate content and task standards they are supposed to teach and assess. Research indicates (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999) that the assessment skills of many teachers are rudimentary – teachers rarely apply assessment techniques beyond simple memory tests, learners are seldom encouraged to ask questions themselves, peer interactions on content knowledge are rare; individual reading is almost nonexistent, and written work is sparse and hardly ever goes beyond single words. The above research indicates that the more sophisticated forms of assessment, as suggested by OBE and described in Curriculum 2005, as above, were well beyond the reach of the majority of South African teachers at that stage.

This situation may well give rise to teachers assessing learners inappropriately, probably resulting either in barriers to learning or learning difficulties being identified where these are non-existent in individual learners, or in existing difficulties being overlooked in individual learners, leading on to further scholastic backlog in such learners. In this regard teachers often underestimate the importance of their role in determining a learner's future success, as reported by Strydom and Du Plessis (2000: 15): "Teachers disabilities" or 'dysteachia' are often written off as 'learning difficulties'. The focus should be on the inadequacies of teachers' skills and the teaching environment, instead of always blaming the child's inadequacies." Assessment within OBE aims to assist the learner, but should also aim at the improvement of teaching too. The empirical part of this study therefore is aimed specifically at teachers' knowledge of and skill in the identification of difficulties in Grade 3, particularly in spelling.

Assessment is especially important in FP as the educator needs to identify barriers to learning and to support these as they arise. It is the intention of the Grade-by-Grade Assessment Standards to guide educators in the identification of barriers to learning (SA, 2003:32). Some assessment techniques that can be used in the FP (SA, 2003:33) are:

- observation: educators observe learners as they participate in individual, pair and group activities, and listens to their conversations and discussions;
- written work: activities presented by learners in writing should be planned in such a way that learners' writing is reflected clearly;

- performance-base assessment: learners demonstrate skills, knowledge and values through observable tasks. Learners are asked to create, produce or demonstrate something. The end product as well as the process that the learners use to complete the task, are assessed;
- interviews (oral questions): evidence is obtained on a learner's ability to listen, interpret and communicate ideas and knowledge during a dialogue or conversation between the educator and the learner. The educator should make notes of the learner's responses;
- self-assessment: learners get the opportunity to reveal what they think and how they feel about themselves, how they feel about their work and how they have met the criteria for the task;
- pair and group assessment: the number of group members can vary from two to approximately ten.

It is clear that teachers need explicit guidelines and assistance in assessing even most basic levels of competence. Teachers' development in this regard has two dimensions: short and long term:

1. in the short term, the development of sets of Grades items is necessary, which model the kind of knowledge, skills and attitudes that need to manifest in the outcomes as described above;
2. in the long term, improving the knowledge and skill of teachers in the identification and support of difficulties is necessary, and for the purpose of this study, specifically of spelling difficulties.

This teacher development process should begin with a new approach to both pre- and in-service training, which commences with a more explicit focus on conceptual knowledge of spelling difficulties, in order to equip teachers with both the confidence and knowledge resources to be able to identify, assess and support spelling difficulties. Without a secure knowledge base to build on, only technical in-service training courses are unlikely to have any success towards learner and teacher development.

2.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter the Literacy Learning Programme, together with its outcomes and assessment, was described. In the next chapter the researcher will focus on the symptoms of writing and spelling difficulties in the Foundation Phase, in first (home) as well as in additional language assessment of spelling skills of the Grade 3 learner.

CHAPTER 3

LANGUAGE AND SPELLING DEVELOPMENT, IDENTIFICATION OF SPELLING DIFFICULTIES, AND THE ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT THEREOF

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the questionnaire is aimed at evaluating the learner's, in the video clip's, behaviour. Therefore no questions were asked in the 2 literature chapters regarding the RNSC or reading barriers.

With the rapid changes taking place in our education system and with the advent of computers and their spelling checks, there is no longer the same emphasis on correct spelling, as in the past. Teachers should, however, endeavour to maintain acceptable standards. They need to be flexible when judging the written work of the visual learner, who often are unable to spell well, and even as adults may still have difficulty with spelling (Lowenberg & Lucas, 1996:83).

Spelling errors should never be overlooked. However, a lower mark for a piece of creative writing should not always be given because of spelling errors. Bizarre errors which interfere with the meaning of context of the work cannot be accepted, but some deviations occur commonly and are becoming more acceptable, such as constituting English spelling with the American version, e.g. *color* for *colour*.

As proficiency in reading and mastery of phonics are needed before the learner is able to spell efficiently; and as spelling is only assessed at the end of Grade 3, learners may not cope with spelling before Grade 3, and may even develop spelling difficulties during the course of the Foundation Phase. However, if it is taken into account that to spell, the learner must be able to automatically and spontaneously write any letter of the alphabet, which entails remembering what it *looks* like (visualisation), remembering what it *sounds* like (auditorisation), and remembering how to make the marks on the page which accurately represent its appearance (write it). The appreciation of this complexity of the development of language and spelling, will make it easier for teachers

and parents to be more tolerant of such difficulties, as well as to support such learners with their difficulties (Lowenberg & Lucas, 1996:83).

3.2 LANGUAGE AND SPELLING DEVELOPMENT

Most human beings acquire language skills in a specific order. It is important for educators working with learners with spelling difficulties to understand how language skills develop and how these skills are related. Language development takes place in five, usually hierarchic, stages:

- listening; that is, auditory receptive language – a person hears and understands other people using language;
- speaking; that is, auditory expressive language – a person uses language to express himself;
- reading; that is, visual receptive language – a person receives language by reading the printed word;
- writing; that is, a person expresses himself by using language in written form – spelling;
- advanced use of a language, such as debating, reading, and listening critically, using language for learning (Lerner, 1989:311-314; Lerner, 2006:358-360).

The first stage is listening to language. No normal language development can take place if the learner does not hear language. All the other language skills are based on the development of listening skills. Later (hierarchically) the learner starts using (speaking) the language. Thereafter the learner starts to read and write. Once these skills have been mastered, advanced language skills such as spelling and reading critically are developed (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004:395; SA, 1998b:1-3). In this regard the stages of spelling development need attention, as proposed by Gentry (Beard, 1999:44).

- The first stage is the *pre-communicative* stage, when young children are making their first attempts at communicating through writing. The writing may contain an illogical mixture of actual letters, numerals and invented symbols, and as such it

will be unreadable though the writers might be able to explain what they intended to write.

- When children are at the *semi-phonetic* stage, they are beginning to understand that letters have sounds and show some knowledge of the alphabet and of letter formation. Words and pictures might be mixed, some words abbreviated, or the initial letters only might be used to indicate the whole word.
- At the *phonetic* stage, children concentrate on a sound-symbol correspondence, their words become more complete and they gain an understanding of word division. They can cope with familiar letter strings such as *-nd*, *-ing* and *-ed* but will have trouble with less obvious phonetic strings such as *-er*, *-ll*, and *-gh* (Jones & Wyse, 2001:150).
- During the *transitional* stage children become less dependent on sound-symbol strategies. With the experience of reading and direct spelling instruction they become more aware of the visual aspects of words. They indicate an awareness of the accepted letter strings and basic writing conventions of the English writing system, and possess an increasing number of correctly spelt words to draw upon.
- Finally, the fully competent speller emerges at the *correct* stage. Correct spelling is being produced completely and confidently almost all the time and there is evidence of the effective use of visual strategies and knowledge of word structure. Children at this stage have an understanding of basic rules and patterns of English and a wide spelling vocabulary. They can distinguish homographs, such as *hear* and *fear*, and homophones, such as *pear* and *pair*, and they are increasingly able to cope with uncommon and irregular spelling patterns.

Teachers may use this developmental framework to identify what stage individual learners are at, what sort of expectations they might have of these learners, what targets they might set for these learners, and what teaching strategies they might usefully employ at any one time. As with any framework or model, however, the achievement of these stages should be broadly interpreted and assessed in an individual learner.

Phonics, spelling, and written language also occur in hierarchic sequence. Phonics is more important for spelling than for reading. Phonic awareness is the ability to notice,

think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words. Learners with a sound phonic knowledge find it easier to spell well, and learners with good spelling ability are usually able to express themselves in the written form with ease, accuracy and fluency (Lowenberg & Lucas, 1996:81-82; Lerner 2006:377).

Beard (1999:44) refers to Gentry's stage model as being very influential, but he does strike several notes of caution. He maintains that the different stages of spelling development represent "complex patterns of thinking and behaviour", and that aspects of several stages of development might be evident in one piece of writing. The teacher therefore needs to evaluate the individual's progress through the stages of spelling development on the basis of a wide sample of writing each time. He also points to the importance of parental support, and the significance of effective teaching of spelling in school. The rate of children's progression through the spelling stages will vary greatly depending on these factors, and of course on individual difference. Beard also makes the point that "spelling development should be related to reading development", and that "many learners seem intuitively to use their phonological knowledge much more in their early writing than they do in their early reading. However, children clearly need to draw on their learning from one in order to develop their learning in the other" (Beard, 1999: 45).

When learners cannot draw from their learning, or experience any barrier or difficulty in their learning, such barriers can be caused by several factors. Spelling difficulties themselves can be regarded as barriers to learning in themselves, and the causes of spelling difficulties can also be regarded as barriers to learning. Such causes of spelling barriers are described next.

3.3 CAUSES OF SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

According to Culatta, Tompkins and Werts (2003:52-53), Landsberg (2005:152-153), Weideman (2002:39), Frederickson and Cline (2002:292) there are many reasons why learners experience spelling barriers. Sometimes these causes lie within the learner (intrinsic causes) and sometimes outside of the learner (extrinsic causes).

3.3.1 Intrinsic causes

Intrinsic means the causes centre on the person of the learner. The following intrinsic factors may cause spelling difficulties/barriers:

- limited mental ability;
- lack of readiness skills: the learner may not have been ready when formal instruction in spelling started;
- poor health: learners who are absent very often due to poor health, miss a lot of work. For example, they might be absent when the educator explains a new spelling rule, does revision or tells the rest of the class a story to help them remember a specific sound;
- sensory defects: learners who have hearing or visual defects will find spelling even more difficult than many other learners. For example, learners who are hard of hearing usually confuse sounds like *m/n*; *th/f*; *b/p*; *v/w*. Learners who are partially-sighted or have other visual defects will probably find it difficult to see what has been written, and copying work from the board or a work chart;
- speech defects: learners who do not pronounce words correctly, usually write the words incorrectly too, for example the learner says *wif* instead of *with* and consequently writes *wif* instead of *with*;
- a dysfunction or injury to the central nervous system, as well as a delay in maturation of the central nervous system, may cause spelling difficulties;
- poor visual perceptual skills: learners may find it difficult to see the difference between letters that look alike, such as *b/d*; *v/w*; *o/a*; *h/n*; *c/e*, or cannot build words with letter cards, for example *smart* = *sm+ar+t*, or cannot divide a word into smaller parts, for example *education* = *e-du-ca-tion*;
- poor auditory perceptual skills: learners may find it difficult to hear the difference between sounds that sound alike, such as *n/m*; *sh/ch*; *ng/nk*; *f/v*; *b/p*. Consequently they might write *net* instead of *met*; *shop* instead of *chop*; *fan* instead of *van*; *big* instead of *pig*;
- lack of language experience;
- behavioural problems: learners with behavioural problems such as an attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder do not always pay attention when the educator is

explaining. Those who are hyperactive often make careless mistakes because they do things without thinking first (impulsivity). Those learners who are hypoactive, tend to daydream and also do not pay attention to the spelling lesson. Consequently they do not take in everything that is being taught and this often results in spelling difficulties;

- emotional problems: learners who continually score low marks in spelling tests lose interest in their work. They expect to do poorly and see no reason why they should do extra work. Some learners become extremely nervous when writing a spelling test. They may do poorly in spelling tests even although they actually do know the work;
- attitude towards spelling: many learners see no reason why words should be spelt correctly.

3.3.2 Extrinsic causes

Extrinsic causes are caused by other people or unfavourable conditions. Spelling difficulties are often caused by extrinsic factors as –

- lack of interest by parents in their child's homework. This often results in learners not doing their homework which was aimed at consolidating spelling rules or phonics that have been taught in the class;
- illiterate parents cannot spell themselves and are not always able to help their children with their homework;
- parent's attitude: Some parents say: "I couldn't spell when I was at school either, but I have a good job! So why worry about learning to spell correctly?" This attitude is carried over to the children who are then also not motivated to learn to spell correctly either;
- learners first language may develop normally until they learn the second language, and then there is an interruption and the first language suffers. Often the teacher then identify these learners as having a language impairment as they are having difficulties in both languages.
- lack of educational material: in many homes there are no books, dictionaries, magazines or other forms of reading material. A learner who does not have the

opportunity to read at home, stays unfamiliar with the written form of words and then often memorise words;g the second language.

- learners may live in a monolingual society (especially in the rural areas) where they hear only thier first language. They find it difficult to communicate with people and experience limited support in learning.
- there may be a discrepancy between what learners expect from language learning and how teachers teach it. Teachers may use methods and approaches which promote fluency and communication as opposed to conventional grammer teaching, which may be in contrast with the learners' expectations and ultimately lead to resistance to instructional practices.
- poor teaching: lessons are often not designed and planned correctly, which may lead to spelling errors being performed by educators themselves, or educators not being able recognise learners' spelling difficulties. It also often happens that spelling lessons turns out to be spelling tests;
- group work may not be effective for all learners, however, some educators only do group teaching. They do not realise that group teaching can limit the opportunity for individual spelling instructions. It will always be necessary to teach a learner who is experiencing spelling difficulties individually;
- differentiation is not applied: most educators give all the learners in the class exactly the same words to learn, in other words these educators do not differen-tiate. In some cases the work may be far too difficult for an individual learner which could cause the learner to become discouraged;
- incorrect pronunciation: sometimes educators pronounce and/or spell words incorrectly themselves. Learners then merely imitate their (incorrect) example;
- unsuitable spelling lists: it often happens that spelling lists contain too many words or contain words that are too difficult. In some cases the spelling lists are not structured. This means that the words in the list do not progress from easy to more difficult;
- rules for spelling are not taught, for example -y changes into *ies* when writing the plural form: *baby=babies; pony=ponies; fly=flies*. In other words the learner has too many "loose" words to learn instead of a group of words that have a rule in common. Learners are then expected to "discover" the rule on their own. Keep in

mind that learners with spelling difficulties will even less discover rules on their own – the rules have to be taught and reinforced;

- revision and reinforcement exercises are neglected or are not meaningful; they may be boring or take the form of drill work;
- too many words are taught during one lesson: This could confuse learners especially those who are already having difficulties;
- some educators punish learners for making spelling mistakes: This can worsen the learner's problem by causing fear, anxiety, aggression, etcetera.
- educators do not plan for success: Learners who do not experience success (score low marks in tests or open their book just to see all their mistakes corrected with a red pen) often develop a poor self-concept and start to believe that they are "stupid." Eventually they might say to themselves: "I can't spell anyway, so why try?"

The identification of spelling difficulties through the manifestation or symptoms thereof, is discussed next.

3.4 IDENTIFICATION OF SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

According to Landsberg (2005:152) English second language (ESL) learners find it difficult to listen to English because the phonological system, phonotactic rules (sound sequences to make up syllables) as well as tone melodies such as high, low, rising and falling tones may differ from the first language, this also influences their speaking and reading. Where ESL learners read well in their first language, they are able to generalise their reading abilities across languages. Where phonic instruction takes place there is often a mismatch between the ESL learner's phonological system of English and received pronunciation on which phonic practice is based. When the learner uses the three-cue system, namely graphophonic, syntactics and semantic, ESL learners are inclined to skip non-essential words and guess at words by using context.

Sound/letter relations between English and the first language may differ as well as letter combinations, and therefore different ways of decoding are used. Because of a lack of vocabulary, they find it difficult to guess what strange words might be.

They may read phonetically, for example *bouquet* as *bouket*. They find it difficult to break up words into syllables and mispronounce words such as *the*, which is read as *de* or *ze*. Because of these reading errors, their comprehension is poor.

Du Toit (1996:161-175), Uys (2001:38-75) and the South African College for Teacher Education (SACTE, 1998:70-72) list the following common spelling difficulties (barriers; symptoms, errors) that learners often manifest in English.

1. Inability to match sounds and symbols:

- * The learner does not know how to write the letters of sounds such as *m, t, r, w, p, g*, etcetera.

2. Auditory discrimination errors:

Sounds that sound alike are confused, for example:

- * i / u: writes *rup* instead of *rip*; *bit* instead of *but*; *truck* instead of *trick*, etc.
- * f / v: writes *vresh* instead of *fresh*; *vreind* instead of *friend*, etc.
- * m / n: writes *met* instead of *net*; *mane* instead of *name*, etc.
- * b / p / d: writes *pig* instead of *big*; *brag* instead of *drag*, etc.
- * n / ng: writes *thin* instead of *thing*; *sing* instead of *sin*, etc.
- * i / ee / ea: writes *heat* instead of *hit*; *slip* instead of *sleep*, etc.
- * sh / ch: writes *chip* instead of *ship*; *rish* instead of *rich*, etc.
- * th / f: writes *wif* instead of *with*; *fought* instead of *thought*, etc.
- * c / k / q: writes *kwite* instead of *quite*; *qut* instead of *cute*, etc.
- * cks / ks / x: writes *micks* instead of *mix*; *pax* instead of *packs*, etc.
- * ck / g: writes *dock* instead of *dog*; *log* instead of *lock*, etc.

3. Visual discrimination errors:

Words that look alike are confused, for example: *saw / was*; *who / how*; *of / off*; *no / on*, etc.

4. Reversals:

- * Reversals of single letters such as *b/d/p* (writes *big* or *dig* instead of *pig*)
- * Reversals of words such as *pot / top*; *saw / was*; *nap / pan*; *step / pets*, etc.

5. Difficulty with consonant blends:

- * Leaves out sounds in an initial blend, for example, writes *bock* instead of block; *sring* instead of string, etc.
 - * Leaves out sounds in a final blend, for example, writes *sad* instead of sand; *jup* instead of jump, etc.
6. Problems with -ll, -ss, -ff:
- * Writes *dres* instead of dress; *his* instead of hiss, etc.
 - * Writes *fil* instead of fill; *bal* instead of ball; *shel* instead of shell.
 - * Writes *puf* instead of puff; *stif* instead of stiff, etc.
7. Confusion of -k / -ke / -ck at the end of a word:
- Writes *thic* instead of thick; *back* instead of bake; *weeck* instead of week, etc.
8. Sequencing errors:
- Letters in a word are written in the wrong order, for instance *carb* instead of crab; *sntad* instead of stand, etc.
9. Difficulties with short and long vowel sounds:
- * Writes *shad* instead of shade; *crim* instead of crime, etc.
 - * Writes *super* instead of supper; *watter* instead of water, etc.
10. Confusion of sound and alphabet names:
- Writes *bate* instead of bat; *meet* instead of met; *thre* instead of three, etc.
11. Confusion of diphthongs:
- * Writes *payd* instead of paid; *coyn* instead of coin; *clowd* instead of cloud, etc.
 - * Confuses *ir* / *er* / *ur*: writes *tirn* or *tern* instead of turn; *mother* instead of mother, etc.
 - * Confuses *ee* / *ea*: writes *creem* instead of cream; *spead* instead of speed, etc.
12. Writes *poni* or *ponee* instead of pony; *babe* instead of baby, etc.
13. Problems with silent letters:
- Writes *nock* instead of knock; *rap* instead of wrap; *thum* instead of thumb, *anser* instead of answer, etc.
14. Problems with homophones:

These are words that sound the same but are spelt differently and have different meanings: writes *son* instead of sun; *one* instead of won; *witch* instead of which, etc.

15. Phonetic spelling:

Writes words exactly as they are pronounced, for example, *sed* instead of said; *sez* instead of says; *cood* instead of could; *cum* instead of come, etc.

16. Difficulty with the hard and soft sounds of *c* and *g*:

Writes *sity* instead of city; *jiant* instead of giant, etc.

17. Problems with plurals:

Writes *babys* instead of babies; *kees* instead of keys; *donkies* instead of donkeys, etc.

18. Problems with suffix endings:

Not dropping the final *-e* when adding on *-ing*, for example, writes *hideing* instead of hiding; *shakeing* instead of shaking, etc.

19. Problems with syllabification rules:

Cannot divide words into syllables to simplify the writing of words, for example, *sim-ply*; *com-pe-ti-tion*; *un-der-stand*, etc.

20. Problems caused by incorrect pronunciation:

Words are pronounced incorrectly and are written the way they are pronounced, for example: *speet* instead of speed; *bed* instead of bad; *boyjil* instead of boil, etc.

After spelling difficulties have been identified, they need to be assessed in more detail, in order to be able to choose and/or design applicable support strategies. The assessment of spelling difficulties is presented next.

3.5 ASSESSMENT OF THE IDENTIFIED SIGNS OF SPELLING DIFFICULTIES

According to Frazer and Maree (2004:207) "Learning a first additional language promotes multilingualism and intercultural communication. In addition, it may be used

as the LoLT. There will be an equal emphasis on the skill of listening, speaking, reading and writing (SA, 2002b:16).

Frederickson and Cline (Landsberg, 2005:154) suggest that when a curriculum-based assessment is envisaged, it is important to determine which tasks the learners is able to succeed in doing and which not. In this way one is able to get an idea of the learner's strengths and weaknesses in terms of the cognitive demand of that curriculum area, as well as the level of contextual support needed in different situations. It is necessary for the teacher to be clear about the outcomes of the lesson and have knowledge of the learner's background and try to match the task with the learner's learning style, proficiency in ELS and interest. Wessels and Van den Berg (1999:100) gives the outcomes of teaching spelling as follows: "outcomes will be achieved when the following knowledge, attitudes, values and skills are demonstrated:

- The knowledge that it is important to give learners the means to access alphabetically arranged information and that good spelling contributes to good communication skills.
- The attitudes and values of wanting to empower learners by means of various challenging activities which will help them to spell correctly and to access information.
- The skills of being able to: - spell words correctly and reach different levels of competence.

Landsberg (2005:154) suggests that the teacher should not have differentiated stereotypical expectations based on ethnicity, but rather be sensitive to the individual differences which are associated with linguistic and cultural diversity. She also stressed the point that ESL learners may be able to cope with cognitive complex tasks (CALP, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. Cummins, 1984:45) but may not have acquired the language skills to master them.

Learners have to be assessed against the outcomes for writing through the assessment criteria and assessment standards for English First or Additional Language, as described in chapter 2. Educators have to design and implement informal assessment strategies to assess these outcomes, as formal spelling tests are not allowed in

continuous assessment. According to Uys (2001:31-37) and Prinsloo (2001:344) formal testing of spelling decoding strategies and skills is in any case not necessary on a day-to-day basis as in continuous assessment. They suggest a functional approach; that is, while learners are learning and practising strategies and skills, the educator should carefully observe their work and collect signs of progress and misunderstanding “on the spot”. Re-teaching, increased practice, modeling, and demonstrations can be given as needed. Periodically, though, and for learners who seem to be having continual difficulty, formal assessment may be valuable. Use of achievement tests provided as part of commercial materials (including basal readers) will give the educator a record of progress. These tests, however, are usually contrived exercises and thus are not good indicators of whether learners are using decoding skills and strategies in their reading and writing. If formal tests must be used, samples and observations of learners’ writing and reading should be added to the test data before any conclusions are reached about learners’ decoding ability.

Weekly spelling tests are one of the most common ways that learners’ spelling is assessed, but all educators must ask themselves what the pros and cons are. One of the most positive features of spelling tests is that lists of words are sent home to be learned. If this is carefully thought through, words lists can provide an activity that many parents feel confident to support their children with. On the negative side, however, spelling tests can only promote rote learning of spelling rules without the learners understanding the decoding skills that are required to be successful spellers. Also, there will always be learners who are poor spellers whose self-esteem will be damaged each time they have to carry out a spelling test.

Dawes and Donald (1994:44) point out that instead of spelling tests, educators should make use of continuous assessment of spelling – every piece of writing that a learner carries out gives an educator an opportunity to assess spelling, and it should be remembered that the kind of writing that the learner is doing will affect the nature of the spelling mistakes. A diary, for example, will pose different challenges as a piece of scientific writing. The most useful assessment of spelling, arguably, takes place at the time that the learners are actually engaged in the writing process in the classroom. This might be during the literacy hour, during an extended writing session beyond the literacy hour, or through the kind of writing workshop described by Wyse (Jones & Wyse, 2001:153), where learners are encouraged to “have a go” at words they already know,

or to use other strategies. These spelling results are then analysed and discussed by the educator and learner during conferencing.

When the spelling difficulties have been assessed and described, applicable support strategies can be designed or applied for the support of these difficulties. These are described next.

3.6 SPELLING SUPPORT STRATEGIES

3.6.1 Learning styles

Supporting spelling aims at establishing new habits, skills and attitudes towards spelling. Since not all learners learn in the same way, each learner has to be supported according to his or her learning style. Some learners learn better when the task is presented orally (auditory learners). Other learners prefer to see things (visual learners). Then there are those learners who learn best when they handle things (kinesthetic learners). Learners of all ages learn faster and easier if a task is presented in a way that suits their style of learning. (Lerner 1989:299-305; 420-421; Lerner 2006:467).

Visual learners have the following habits:

- they prefer to sit where they can see what is going on;
- remember faces better than names;
- close their eyes to form a visual image of what they have heard;
- work is usually very neat;
- find something to look at when they are bored;
- learn better when visual aids are used during a lesson;
- prefer a quiet environment when working;
- have no visual perceptual problems (SA, 1998b:72).

Auditory learners on the other hand -

- prefer to sit where they can hear what is going on;
- do not always pay attention to what is being shown by the teacher;

- remember names better than faces;
- mumble to themselves when they are bored;
- talk a lot;
- like to listen to what others have to say;
- are able to work in a noisy environment;
- like to listen to music;
- have no auditory problems (SA, 1998b:72).

Kinesthetic learners -

- prefer to sit where there is enough space to move around;
- find it difficult to repeat what they have heard;
- need to be active and cannot sit still for very long;
- need short lessons with short breaks in between;
- use many hand movements and gestures when talking;
- fidget with anything when bored;
- need to be more physically involved in a lesson than other learners;
- become restless if they have to sit and listen or watch for a long time (SACTE, 1998:72).

3.6.2 General principles for supporting spelling difficulties

Spelling rules differ from language to language. There are, however, general principles which apply to the support of nearly all spelling difficulties as described above, in most languages:

- Plan for success. This is one of the best ways in which an educator can motivate the learners and build self-confidence.
- Make the lesson as interesting as possible. Make use of games, word puzzles, sound wheels, etc.
- Do not let the learners sacrifice extra-mural activities, breaks or other pleasant activities to do extra-spelling work.

- Use a multisensory method. This means that more than one sense are involved when teaching. The learners should hear, see, say, write and even feel the word. This is one of the most successful ways of teaching spelling and reading. According to Lerner (1989:420; 2006:467) this technique comes in handy when learners are frequently at a loss as to what to do. The following five steps can help as a multisensory approach that utilizes the visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile modalities.
 - 1) Meaning and pronunciation: Have the learners look at the word, pronounce it correctly, and use it in a sentence.
 - 2) Imagery: Ask the learner to “see” the word and say it. Have them say each syllable of the word, spell the word orally, and then trace the word in the air or over the word with a finger.
 - 3) Recall: Ask the learners to look at the word and then close their eyes and see it in their mind’s eye. Have them spell the word orally. Ask them to open their eyes to see if they were correct.
 - 4) Write the word: Ask learners to write the word correctly from memory, check the spelling against the original, and then check the writing to make sure every letter is legible.
 - 5) Mastery: Have the learners cover the words and write it. Two more times.
- The educator must make use of teaching and learning aids as often as possible.
- The educator must make sure that he / she pronounces the spelling words correctly.
- The educator must keep the learners’ individual learning styles in mind. If the learner is a visual learner, start the lesson with a visual activity such as playing a visual game. The learners look at the word. For the auditory learner, the educator should start the lesson with an auditory activity such as listening to the word / sound and looking carefully to the educator’s mouth as he / she pronounces the sound / word. The educator pronounces it a few times and the learner makes a link between the visual and auditory process by also looking at the word. For the kinesthetic learner, tell the learner to look at the sound.
- Not too many words must be taught at a time.
- Plan short, regular lessons rather than one very long lesson.

- Explain the difference between the sound of a letter and its alphabet name.
- Teach high-frequency words such as *said, come, little*, etc.
- Include ways of helping learners to remember the sound rules.
- Do regular revision of work taught. The educator should, however, avoid boring and aimless activities.
- At the end of the year the Grade 3 learners can start to use a dictionary. In the beginning of the year the educator can help the learners to compile a simple dictionary with words that the learners have trouble with. The educator can also make use of a word wall.
- Teach metacognitive strategies for spelling. This means that learners must check their own work for spelling mistakes before handing in a piece of work. No matter which method the educator uses, all learners should be taught to think about their spelling. An example of following a metacognitive strategy is to write the following steps on a card and the learners follow these steps when they are busy writing words:
 1. Do I know the word I am writing?
 2. How many sounds/syllables do I hear? What are they?
 3. I will write the word.
 4. Do I have the right number of sounds/syllables?
 5. Am I unsure of any part of the word?
 6. Is there a story or a rule which can help me to remember the part I am unsure of?
 7. I will try to “see” the word in my mind again and listen to the sound or syllables.
 8. I will write it again.
 9. Does it look right this time?
 10. If so I will leave it at that.
 11. If I still have problems with the word, I will look in the dictionary or ask for help.
- Do not punish a weak speller for spelling mistakes.
- Work sheets and work cards must be neat and the writing must be legible. Very often printed copies are of a poor quality and this makes it more difficult to read.

- Where possible, teach word families. These are words that have the same sound or follow the same rules. It means the words all have something in common. For example:
 - y: my by why try dry cry shy spy sky fly sly
 - i: night might light slight tight fight bright flight fright
 - ade: made fade wade trade spade Grade glade blade
- Lowenberg and Lucas (1996:85) suggest the following support strategies which can also be encouraged by introducing incentives:
 - * When marking spelling words, give a mark for each letter that is in the correct place, for example, *friend* written as *friend* will give them four marks. All the marks are added together with a goal towards the maximum number of marks, which can earn a special privilege at the end of the week. Graphs are also useful as the learner then has a visual record of his or her progress.
 - * Another incentive game is an index box with two sets of cards, where the words being learnt are placed alphabetically from the front card backwards, and once they have been learnt and written correctly, three times consecutively, these cards are placed at the back of the pack known as the “bank”, which earns the learner an amount of money which can be banked in any container. At some stage the learner is informed that he can cash up. However, at another surprise opportunity the learner will have to pass a test again on the words in the bank, and if mistakes are made, an amount must be “pay back” for each mistake. If no mistakes are made, a learner may keep the money. The whole process can be repeated for another set of words.

3.6.3 Strategies for spelling support

There are books full of different strategies to support spelling. For me as a Grade 3 EFAL teacher, I focus on the following from experience. The following strategies are suggested by Lerner (1989:420-421) and the Department of Education (SA, 1998b:79-88):

3.6.3.1 Multisensory methods

Learners with spelling difficulties did not learn successfully when traditional support methods like rote learning were used in the previous curriculum. Other more applicable methods need to be designed. Multisensory methods are one of the methods of teaching spelling (Readence & Searfoss, 1994:173; SA, 1998b:78). The word multisensory means that more than one sense is involved. Most learners who experience learning difficulties lack the ability to apply all their senses, such as perceptual, feeling or touching. This method is also useful because the different learning styles of the learners – visual, auditory and kinesthetic, as described above. There are different types of multisensory methods according to Lerner (1989:420-421; Lerner, 2006:416-417, 454, 467-468):

- 1). Meaning and pronunciation: Have the learners look at the word, pronounce it correctly, and use it in a sentence.
- 2). Imagery: Ask the learner to “see” the word and say it. Have them say each syllable of the word, spell the word orally, and then trace the word in the air or over the word with a finger.
- 3) Recall: Ask the learners to look at the word and then close their eyes and see it in their mind’s eye. Have them spell the word orally. Ask them to open their eyes to see if they were correct.
- 4). Write the word: Ask learners to write the word correctly from memory, check the spelling against the original, and then check the writing to make sure every letter is legible.
- 5). Mastery: Have the learners cover the words and write it. Two more times.

Cover-and-write method:

Learners are taught to spell words in the following way:

- Look at the sound or word and say it.
- Write the sound or word twice while looking at it.
- Cover the sound or word and write it again.
- Check to see if the sound or word has been written correctly (SA, 1998b:78).

Say-and-write method:

The following steps are followed:

- Say the sound or word.
- Write the sound or word.
- Trace and say the word.
- Write it from memory and check.
- Repeat the above steps (SACTE, 1998:78).

The Fernald method (1943 / 1988):

The following method is a multi-sensory approach:

- Learners are told that they are going to learn words in a new way that has proved to be successful. They are encouraged to select a word that they wish to learn.
- The teacher writes that word on a piece of paper, big enough for the learners to see. The teacher says the word.
- The learners trace the word, saying it several times, and then write it on a separate piece of paper while saying it.
- The learners write the word from memory without looking at the original copy. If it is incorrect, the tracing and saying steps are repeated. If it is correct, it is put in a file box. The words in the file box are used later in stories.
- At later stages, this painstaking tracing method for learning words is not needed. Now the learners learn a word by looking as the teacher writes it, saying it, and writing it. At a still later stage, the learners can learn by only looking at a word in print and writing it, and, finally by merely looking at it (Lerner, 1989:420; Lerner, 2006:468).

The “test-study-test” versus the “study-test” method:

In teaching spelling to a classroom, there are two common approaches: the “test-study-test” and the “study-test” planes. The test-study-test method uses a pretest, which is usually given at the beginning of the week. The learners then study only those words that were missed on the pretest. This method is better for older learners who have fairly

good spelling abilities, since there is no need to study words they already know. The study-test method is better for young learners and those with poor spelling abilities. Since too many words would be missed on a pretest, this method permits the study of a few well-selected words before the test is given (Lerner, 1989:421; Lerner 2006:468).

The VAKTI method:

This is the visual-auditory-kinesthetic-tactile-imagery method. It means four senses and imagination (where the learners see the sound or the word in their mind). are involved in the spelling programme: learners see, hear, touch and feel a letter Lerner (2006:467). The method was compiled by South African College for Teacher Education in 1998. I include this method in the study because from experience it has excellent results when teaching English First Additional Learners (EFAL) in the grade 3 classroom. The VAKTI method also links with Cummins (1984:136-138) Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS allows learners the skills to speak and cope with pronunciation and vocabulary in order to be able to use English in everyday life. CALP, on the other hand, enables learners to become competent academic communicators who are capable of portraying various life skills such as the ability to be engaged in cognitively demanding and problem-solving tasks.

According to Schlebusch and Thobedi (2005:309) it is ideal for learners in the EFAL classroom to attain a CALP level of English proficiency in order to experience academic success. Language competence at BICS level does not equip a learner to perform cognitive operations with adequate proficiency. Cognitive aspects can be explained in terms of Bloom's taxonomy (Nieman & Monyai, 2006:80-81) of educational objectives. On the conversational proficiency (surface level), **knowledge** (something you previously encountered or learned and remembered), **comprehension** (grasp of basic meaning), and **application** (use of abstractions in particular and concrete situations), are involved. The deeper levels of cognitive / academic proficiency would involve **analysis** (when a whole is broken into parts), **syntheses** (putting elements into a coherent whole) and **evaluation** (judging the adequacy of ideas). EFAL educators should assist their learners to attain all the above-mentioned education objectives, where the first three objectives relate to a possible BICS level and the last three to the CALP level of English

proficiency. The OBE approach in the EFAL classroom allows for educators to be creative and involve learners in classroom activities, which may positively enhance the transition of EFAL from BICS to CALP. Educators who use only lower order questions (testing only knowledge) are most certainly not meeting the requirements of OBE. The advantages of higher order questions are that they encourage learners to make judgements, express their own opinions, substantiate what they say, notice connections between things, evaluate, search for solutions to problems, create new things and make predictions. These kind of skills are absolutely indispensable in everyday life, and they must therefore enjoy special attention in the classroom (Nieman & Monyai, 2006:80-81; Skutnabb-Kangas,1981:111-114).

Matjila and Pretorius (2004:3) assume that "all learners have acquired BICS in their primary language by the time they start school. They start acquiring CALP when they learn to read and write and are exposed to written forms of language, first via easy readers and then via a range of increasingly more complex narrative and expository text.

Many learners may acquire high levels of proficiency in a language but if it is mainly BICS proficiency that they are unlikely to succeed in the learning context. The sources of knowledge to which the learners need access are expressed via written forms of language that require CALP. Much of the linguistic proficiency that underpins reading and spelling ability is CALP-based, acquired on extensive exposure to written discourse.

According to Matjila and Pretorius (2004:3) other differences between oral and written discourse, and which are reflected in BICS and CALP modes of language use – are reflected in lexical and grammatical features. Written discourse in English expository texts, for example, has greater frequency of grammatical constructions such as relative clauses, passives and nominalisations. They also state that there is a difference in the statistical distribution of content words that occur in oral and written language. Oral contains high frequency words common to our everyday lives, while written work contains a much higher degree of lexical density, comprising many low frequency words, specialist technical words and general scientific (academic) vocabulary.

By using this method, the educator starts with the learner's strong modality (visual or kinesthetic). The following lesson however, also includes auditory activities which

should help to improve the learner's auditory skills. A practical example of teaching the *ch* sound through this method is the following:

Word family: *chap chop chip chin chat chum check chick chuck chest*
chess chill cheap cheep cheek rich such much which

Step 1

Write the *ch* sound on a flash card. (Use print [manuscript] writing because most learners usually 'think' and 'see' in print when they are expected to write a word).

Step 2: Visual

Show the *ch* flash card. Tell the learners to look at it carefully.

Step 3: Auditory

The educator holds the flash card containing the *ch* sound near his / her mouth. The learners are told to watch his / her mouth carefully to see how the sound is pronounced. The educator pronounces it a few times. The learner makes a link between the visual and auditory process by pronouncing the sound while pointing to it on the flash card.

Step 4: Kinesthetic

The educator tells the learners to look at the sound. They must close their eyes and 'write' it in the air using the second finger of the hand which they write with.

Step 5: Tactile

The learners open their eyes and write the sound in wet sand. To integrate the tactile sense, write the sound on sand-paper and cut out the letters. Learners must trace over the letters with the second finger of the hand with which they write. Tell the learners to study the sound very carefully. When they think they are able to 'see' the word in their mind, they must close their eyes. The educator can then ask questions like:

- "Which two letters make the *ch* sound?"
- "Which letter is first?"
- "Which letter comes after the *c*?"
- "Which letter is to the left / right?"

- “How many letters form the sound *ch*?”
- “Which letter is last?”
- “Which letter comes before the *h*?”

If they cannot ‘see’ the sound any longer, they must open their eyes and look again. The questions are repeated. Praise the learners for giving correct answers.

3.6.3.2 Phonic programme

The following programme implements an integrated perceptual and metacognitive approach.

Lesson 1

Follow the steps in the VAKTI method.

Lesson 2

- *Association strategy* is used to help learners remember the *ch* sound. A story can for example be about Clever Cat going into the house to get some *ch-c-ch-cheese*. The educator can draw a picture and tell a story related to the *ch* sound. The educator can also use finger puppets with a *c* on the one finger and *h* on the other one.
- *Visual discrimination* can be used to learn the *ch*, *sh*, *ck* sound: the educator prepares several flash cards or worksheets containing words with the above sounds. The learners must only pick the *ch* words.
- *Auditory discrimination*: the educator says two words at a time. The learners must say whether they are the same or different:

shop –chop; shoe-chew; chips-ships; cap-chap; shin-chin; cheat-sheer;
 chair-share; rush-rich; cheer-sheer; cherry-sherry; wash-watch; choose-shoes;
 chick-kick; teacher-t-shirt; match-mash; shrimp-chimp; which-wish; ink-inch;
 search-church; cash-catch; camp-champ; cane-chain; chief-chef

Lesson 3

- Visual analyses and synthesis
- *Auditory analysis:* This is rather a difficult activity so it is best to do it visually first. Write a word, for example *chip*, on the board. Rub out *ch* and put *sh* in its place. What is the word now? *Ship*. Rub out *sh* and write *t* in its place. What is the word now? *Tip*. Do the same by writing sounds such as *d*, *cl*, *dr*, *wh*, *gr*, etc. The educator can substitute the initial (first) sound without visual example first: the educator says: "Say *chop*, but instead of *ch* say *sh*: shop"; the same with *chart* and *smart*, etc. The educator can also substitute the last sound. Do this activity first visually as with the initial sound. Then do the following without visual examples: the educator says: "Say *chop*, but instead of *p* say *ck*: chock; the same with *chat* and *chap*, etc. The educator can also substitute the middle sound. Also do this activity first visually. The educator says: "Say *chap*, but instead of *a* say *i*: chip; the same with *chick* and *check*, etc.

Lesson 4:

- *Visual memory and sequencing:* the educator lays out three or more flash cards, for example *chop*, *chat*, *chin*. Learners look at it for a few seconds. Then the educator removes the flash cards. The learners must pack their own flash cards in the same order.
- *Auditory memory and sequencing:* the educator says three or more words, for example *cheat*, *cheap*, *chip*. The learners must pack out their own flash cards in the same order. A variation can be that learners are given a worksheet containing *ch* words and they must circle or underline the words said by the educator. For example: "In the first row, underline *chain*, *chips* and *rich*. In the second row, underline *chart*, *charm*, and *chill*", etc.

Lesson 5:

- *Visual figure-ground:* use a worksheet for a word-search:

b	t	r	c	h	i	p	n	t
c	c	h	a	p	v	r	s	n

c	h	i	c	k	e	v	b	d
s	r	k	i	u	c	h	a	t
r	c	h	i	l	l	r	r	e
x	m	c	h	u	c	k	u	t
r	i	c	h	t	i	n	g	p

- *Auditory figure-ground*: play music or a story on CD. Repeat the exercises for auditory discrimination or auditory memory and sequencing while the CD is playing.

Lesson 6:

- *Visual and auditory closure*: the activity is to build a 'wall' with words containing specific sounds, added like bricks.

The educator says a sentence with missing *ch*-words, and the learners fill in the missing words on the 'brick wall', for example: "The little mouse sat on the ...? *chair*, eating some...? *Cheese*. Now write the brick word *cheese* on the wall".

Lesson 7:

Let the learners do dictation. The number of sentences will vary according to their abilities. For example: "We ate fish and chips for supper last night". The sentence must however not be dictated word by word but as a whole sentence. The learners must then mark their own sentences and correct the mistakes. The dictation with the same sentences must be consolidated in the next lesson.

3.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter the following aspects were described: language and spelling development, identification and assessment of spelling difficulties, and support strategies for spelling difficulties.

In the next chapter the empirical investigation is described, in terms of the identification and support skills of spelling difficulties by Foundation Phase educators.

CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the empirical research in terms of the following aspects:

- Methodology
- Empirical results
- Discussion of the results

4.2 METHODOLOGY

4.2.1 Objectives of the empirical research

The main objective of this empirical research is to determine whether educators are able to identify spelling difficulties experienced by learners in a first additional language in Grade 3. This research was performed in schools with Setswana as the language of instruction, but for many of these learners Tswana is their first additional language. (That is why the literature study in chapter 3 is about first additional language.)

The research design of this specific empirical study is described as follows:

4.2.2 Research design

4.2.2.1 Method of research

In the light of the aim of the empirical study, the empirical research is qualitative in nature. The term qualitative research encompasses several approaches to research that are in some respects quite different from one another. In other words, there are several qualitative research designs that can be used by the researcher for qualitative research purposes. Only the design relevant to this research will be discussed in this chapter, and not the other existing designs.

All qualitative approaches have two characteristics in common. Firstly, they focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings, that is, in the 'real world'. Secondly, they involve studying those phenomena in all their complexity (Leedy & Ormod, 2005:147).

The researcher chose a qualitative research approach due to the fact that it serves the following purposes in this empirical investigation:

- *Description:* This approach reveals the nature of the classroom setting, in terms of the instruction methods used by the educators in the classroom, as well as the educators' ability to identify spelling difficulties within the classroom.
- *Interpretation:* This enables the researcher to gain insight into the nature of educators' skills and knowledge in the identification and support of spelling difficulties within the classroom.
- *Verification:* This allows the researcher to test the possibility that educators in South Africa are not equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify and support spelling difficulties.
- *Evaluation:* This provides a means through which the researcher can judge the effectiveness of the educators' ability in the identification and support of spelling difficulties in the classroom situation.

The qualitative research design that was used in this study is a content analysis design. A content analysis encompasses a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes or biases. Content analyses are typically performed on forms of human communication, including videotapes of human interactions, and transcripts of conversations, etc. A content analysis is systematic, and measures are taken to make the process as objective as possible. The following steps are typical:

- The researcher identifies the specific body of material to be studied. In this research the body of material consists of the questionnaires containing data about the ability of educators to identify and support spelling difficulties.

- The researcher defines the characteristics or qualities to be investigated in precise, concrete terms. In this research, aspects such as behaviour, reading, spelling and written language difficulties are investigated.
- If the material to be analysed involves complex or lengthy items (e.g. answers to questionnaires), the researcher breaks down each item into small, manageable segments that are analysed separately. In this investigation the answers to each of the questions on the questionnaire are analysed separately.
- The researcher scrutinises the material; in this investigation it encompasses the answers to the questionnaires.

4.2.2.2 Population and target group/sample

The population in this research refers to all Grade 3 educators in South Africa. The target group comprises all the educators in the North-West Province. The sample chosen for this research involves nine educators in the Foundation Phase in Potchefstroom, which is situated in the North-West Province.

The method of sampling used in this research is known as purposive sampling or convenience sampling. In purposive sampling the participants are selected because of a particular purpose. In this research Grade 3 educators were selected, as the aim of the study is to determine whether these educators have the knowledge and skills to identify learning difficulties in learners in Grade 3. The sample consists of three educators from three different schools in the Potchefstroom district with Tswana as medium of instruction, but where Tswana is a first additional language. One Grade 3 educator per school from the three schools (n=3) was selected to participate in this research.

As this study is a qualitative and convenience study, not many respondents are needed, according to the statistical support service of the North-West University. The study is also referred to as a convenience study mainly because the University of North-West is situated in Potchefstroom, and the selected schools are nearby. The respondents were accessible, available and participated willingly in this research.

4.2.2.3 Measuring Instrument

The questionnaire used in this research was compiled based on information acquired from the literature study discussed in chapter 3 about the signs of spelling difficulties, as well as on the actual language and spelling behaviour in Tswana that the Grade 3 learner manifests on the video. Tswana probably is the first additional language of many learners who receive instruction in Tswana.

An unstructured questionnaire was used as the measuring instrument for this research. An unstructured questionnaire is a document that poses the same questions to all participants (Gall *et al.*, 2003:222). The participants issue a written response to every question. The participants have control over the data-gathering process, as they complete the questionnaire by themselves. The participants can complete the questionnaire at their own pace. The participants may decide to leave certain questions unanswered and can provide unique answers.

According to Delport (2002:179) and Gall *et al.* (1996:295) a questionnaire may comprise of open and closed questions. For this specific research, questions are open to give respondents the opportunity to express their own knowledge and observations.

The questionnaires were given to Setswana speaking educators who teach in Tswana as well as English First Additional Language. The questionnaire comprises of a variety of questions concerning the identification of language and spelling difficulties experienced by a learner in the Tswana language in Grade 3. Written and oral errors in the area of language need to be identified.

Videos illustrating the learner experiencing spelling difficulties were issued to the selected schools. The videos are about the learner receiving instruction in the Tswana, who experiences spelling difficulties in Tswana, which probably is the first additional language of the learner. The participants teaching Grade 3 were asked to observe the video and answer the questionnaire. The questionnaire is discussed below.

There are several reasons to justify the use of videotapes in this research, namely:

- The use of videotapes proves to be far more practical in nature. Educators can watch the videotape in their own time and at their own pace.

- There are no variables to distract the educator observing the behaviour and learning difficulties depicted on the video. This is far more practical than expecting educators to physically be present during a lesson conducted by another educator. By utilizing videotapes, no situation or information can be over-looked due to interruptions or unforeseen circumstances.
- Should the educators experience distractions or interruptions whilst observing the videotape, they can always rewind the necessary piece and view it as often as desired.
- The video depicts the difficulties that need to be identified. All other irrelevant information and daily classroom events are eliminated on the video.
- This method is user friendly and saves time. Several educators can watch the videotape simultaneously instead of making time-consuming arrangements for them to attend specific lessons to observe real lessons.

The focus of each question on the questionnaire is to ascertain what the knowledge and skills are of the Grade 3 educators about the identification of the language and spelling difficulties as observable on the video. The language aspects comprises written language, reading and spelling ability, and observable behavioural aspects that occur during these activities in a classroom. The purpose of each question on the questionnaire is described next.

Question 1: What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

The purpose is to determine whether the educators are aware of behaviour patterns within learners and whether they can identify possible problems in behaviour.

Question 2: Describe her style of silent reading while reading on the board to copy on her work sheet.

The purpose of this question is to determine whether the educators can identify specific styles of silent reading within learners.

Question 3: What kind of oral and reading errors does she make?

The purpose of this question is to determine whether the educators have the knowledge and skills to identify oral and reading errors in learners.

Question 4: What kind of writing errors does she make (compare her written letter on the work sheet)?

The purpose of this question is to determine whether educators are equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify writing errors experienced by learners.

Question 5: What kind of errors does she make while writing words dictated by fellow learners (compare the blue page)?

The purpose of this question is to determine whether the educators are equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify these writing errors.

Question 6: What kind of writing errors does she make while writing words, dictated by the teacher and already written on the board (compare the white paper)?

The purpose of this question is to determine whether the educators have the ability to identify errors in the learner's written work.

Question 7: What kind of errors does she make while writing dictation on the board?

The purpose of this question is to determine whether the educators can identify written errors made by the learner.

Question 8: What other (than language) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap her during the lesson?

The purpose of this question is to determine whether the educators are aware of obstructions or deficiencies that obstruct learning. This question will also determine what the educator regards as obstructive and deficient.

Question 9: With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her language difficulties?

The purpose of this question is to determine whether the educators are able to use different forms of assessment and other techniques in order to assess language and spelling difficulties experienced by the learner.

Question 10: Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher? (Answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’)

The purpose of this question is to determine whether the educators have the knowledge and skills to use a variety of ways or methods to present a lesson.

Question 11: With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?

The purpose of this question is to determine whether the educators have the knowledge and skills to assist learners who experience language difficulties.

Question 12: Which language, reading and writing difficulties would you assist her with?

The purpose of this question is to determine whether the educators are equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify language, reading and writing difficulties within learners.

The possible correct answers to each question are described next. These are derived from the literature in chapter 2 on the outcomes of writing in Grade 3, as well as from chapter 3 on reading and language difficulties, and mostly from the real behaviour exhibited by the learner on the video, pertaining to reading and writing.

1. What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

- * Clowning around
- * Looking around and looking puzzled
- * Fidgeting
- * Frowning and erasing

- * Not working
- * Not participating in class activities

2. Describe her style of silent reading while reading on the board to copy on the worksheet.

- * Eye problems
- * Poor letter identification
- * Poor letter / sound correspondence
- * Confusion
- * Lack of self-confidence

3. What kind of oral reading and language errors does she make?

- * Wrong letter identification
- * Wrong letter discrimination
- * Poor letter / sound correspondence
- * Wrong letter order in words
- * Eye problems
- * Poor language

4. What kind of writing errors does she make (compare her written letter on the work sheet)?

- * Poor handwriting
- * Wrong letter shape
- * Wrong letter identification
- * Letter reversals

5. What kind of errors does she make while writing words dictated by fellow learners (compare the blue page)

- * Poor letter / sound correspondence
- * Wrong letter order in words
- * Wrong letter discrimination
- * Eye problems

6. What kind of writing errors does she make while writing words, dictated by the teacher and already written on the board (compare the white paper)?

- * Wrong letter formation
- * Wrong letter identification
- * Poor handwriting
- * Wrong letter order in words
- * Poor letter / sound correspondence
- * Reversal of letters

7. What kind of errors does she make while writing dictation on the board?

- * Wrong letter formation
- * Wrong letter order
- * Poor handwriting
- * Wrong letter identification
- * Poor letter/sound correspondence

8. What other (than language) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap her during the lesson?

- * Lack of concentration
- * No self confidence
- * Possible eye problems
- * Poor health
- * Appearing physically uncomfortable in her chair
- * Eye problems
- * Fine motor co-ordination problems
- * Laterality and directionality
- * Auditory perception
- * Memory difficulties
- * Crossing the mid-line
- * Speech and articulation difficulties
- * The general health status of the learner

9. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her language difficulties?

- * Test the alphabet and the sounds
- * Test the look and say words
- * Listen to the learner carefully
- * General observation
- * Test eye span
- * Test hearing ability

10. Would you explain the lesson material to her in another way than the teacher? If answered "yes", explain how.

- * Learner must first explain what he sees before the educator continues.
- * The educator can make use of more flashcards
- * Drill work can be done more intensively
- * More individual attention

11. With what approaches or techniques would you assist her?

- * Create a story or song to reinforce the specific sound
- * Make sure the learner can identify and sound the letter correctly before moving on to sounds or words
- * Give the learner several fine motor skill exercises to assist with handwriting problems.

12. Which language, reading and writing difficulties would you assist her with?

- * Letter identification
- * Pronunciation
- * Letter shape
- * Handwriting exercises
- * Letter discrimination
- * Letter/sound correspondence
- * Letter formation exercises

If the educators are aware of the writing outcomes described in chapter 2, the following aspects on the video should be noticed (Culata *et al.*, 2003:52-53; Landsberg, 2005:152-153; Weideman, 2002:39; Frederickson & Cline, 2002:292; Du Toit, 1996:161-175; Uys, 2001:38-75; SACTE, 1998:70-72):

- The learner shows letter reversals such as 'w' instead of 'm' or omission of letters, which means that the outcome of: "Writes individual words", is not achieved.
- Wrong word order and wrong copying from the board occurs, which means that the outcome of: "Writes sentences by using a frame or writes own sentences without a frame or sequence and copy sentences or writes short formulaic text or use a frame and writes a recount", is not achieved.
- Incorrect letter formation and poor handwriting occurs, which means the outcome of "Putting together two or three letters to make one sound (blends) will be difficult to achieve, because the question will be, is the learner able to comprehend what is written?", is not achieved.
- Writing for long periods of time without comprehension occurs, which means that the outcome of "Understanding themselves and their world by becoming aware of how people use language of various purposes or the access to information, life long learning and work opportunities", is not achieved.

Other possible general answers that can be regarded as correct and applicable to all the questions on the questionnaire are the following:

- Learners never learn at exactly the same pace. All learners are unique (Nieman & Monyai, 2006:80-81; Matjila & Pretorius, 2004:3).
- Learners who experience difficulties should receive more attention and encouragement than the other learners.
- Learners who experience difficulties should not sit next to a learner who distracts them or aggravates the problem (Killen, 1998:vi; Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2005: 308).
- Attention should be given to physical factors. Example: fine motor co-ordination, eyesight, hearing ability, crossing the midline etc.

- Learners with difficulties should be placed in the front of the class (Killen, 1998:vi; Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2005:308).
- The board should be clearly visible to all learners (Killen, 1998:vi; Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2005:308).
- Ask learners with difficulties to repeat what they have to do in order to ensure that they understand.
- Speak to learners with difficulties slowly and carefully, making sure that all instructions are repeated and carried out successfully before moving on to the next task.
- Continuously praise learners and build up their self-confidence. The above 3 relates to the OBE approach where educators need to change from an educator-centred approach to a learner-centred approach (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2005: 308; Van Schalkwyk, 2001:3; Rassoolet *et al.*, 2006:546).

4.2.3 Implementation of empirical research

A letter was presented to the Department of Education in the North-West Province, requesting permission to perform the research in schools in the North-West Province. This letter (see Addendum A) as well as the consent received from the Department (see Addendum B) were presented to the principals of the selected sample schools, requesting their permission to conduct the research in their schools. After consent was granted, the educators in the three selected schools were approached and requested to view the videos, and then to answer the questionnaire (see Addendum C) provided on the video. The educators viewed the video and filled in the questionnaires in their own time and at their own pace, independently. The researcher thereafter collected the questionnaires personally. Subsequently each question was qualitatively analysed. The results of this analysis are presented next.

4.3 RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The answers to the questions are presented verbatim, to display the authentic results. The results as provided by all three Grade 3 educators respectively, are quoted below verbatim, per sentence or line. The reader should note that the number of answers (sentences) per question differs. This is due to some of the educators giving several answers to one question, and others not answering that question at all. Therefore the

number of answers listed below each question is not indicative of the number of educators. Therefore each answer is quoted separately in a separate line. Even when one teacher supplied more than one answer, each answer is quoted separately.

The rationale for presenting the answers in this way, and not per teacher, is that a *global* impression can be gained of the quality of the *total responses on each question, of the Grade 3 teachers as a group, and not as individuals*. The quality and amount of possible correct answers of the group of teachers is therefore the aim of the investigation, and not whether each individual teacher answered each question correctly or not. The questions in the questionnaires derived from the behaviour of the learners. That is the reason why no questions were asked in the two literature chapters regarding the RNCS or spelling difficulties.

1. What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

- * "She is hesitant before she starts. Shows brevity on her face [sic] and letters are not visible enough. She looks around before writing and lacks concentration."
- * "Looking around as if there is no lesson going on. Looking for help from the facilitator's side. Plays with fingers and thinks that the lesson is boring. Does not follow instructions and does not follow the stories."
- * "Works slowly. Does not sit still, up right, keeps moving on chair. Looks anxious when her name is called and a question is posed. Inattentive, eyes are on the video camera. Fidgets, plays with ruler, eats rubber, pages and the corner of a book. Frowns when reading, this shows that she has difficulty with something. She is not sure of the answers, so she looks around for help from learners."

2. Describe her style of silent reading while reading on the board to copy on her work sheet.

- * Unanswered
- * "Could not hear what she was reading."
- * "Takes a long time to read a word. Lips are moving while reading. Head is moving while reading."

3. What kind of oral reading and language errors does she make?

- * "Unable to read. She waits for the teacher to say a word for her to repeat. Doesn't know where to start reading."
- * "Does not follow where to read. Points to words when reading. Does not recognize words in reading piece."
- * "Sounds words. That is the only way to read [sic]. Reading does not make sense. Keeps looking around."

4. What kind of writing errors does she make (compare her written letter on the work sheet)

- * "Doesn't start with the address on the right place."
- * "I couldn't see the worksheet on the video."
- * "Spacing problem. Can't form the letters correctly. Writes for long periods and doesn't comprehend what has been written."

5. What kind of errors does she make while writing words dictated by fellow learners (compare the blue page).

- * Unanswered
- * "Omits some letters."
- * "Spacing"

6. What kind of writing errors does she make while writing words, dictated by the teacher and already written on the board (compare the white paper)

- * "No or poor spacing, write letters on top of each other."
- * "Transcribes from board but doesn't understand what she is writing. Uses parts of words and combines it with other words and nothing makes sense."
- * "Spells incorrectly when transcribing. Very slow in transcribing. Errors in the use of capital letters and mix capital letters and small letters. Poor handwriting."

7. What kind of errors does she make while writing dictation on the board?

- * "Spacing of letters."

- * "Wrong word order."

- * "Poor hand writing."

8. What other (than language) abilities do you observe to be deficient and that may handicap her during the lesson?

- * "She doesn't compare her work to the teacher's work, but rather copies what other learners have written. She has no self-confidence. She couldn't read her own work and cannot read aloud."

- * "Concentration is poor."

- * "Auditory memory – she can't recall what was said. Visual memory – can't recall what she saw. Karabo depends on other learners. She lacks the ability to carry out instructions."

9. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her language difficulties?

- * "Reading problem: Which makes her refer to what others have written. This event delays her writing speed. Oral reading: Monitor the types of processing strategies she uses-observe. The three stages of reading: before reading, during reading and after reading."

- * "Cloze procedure: materials are prepared by omitting words randomly or selectively. The learner chooses a word suitable for the missing one."

- * "Flash cards. Phonics – look and say."

- * "Write the short letter maybe only two lines to find out if she can read what she wrote."

- * "Involve them in groups and see if they can gain self-confidence."

- * "Start to teach vowels and then add consonants."

- * "Remedial classes. Give letters to build words with. Scramble the words and ask them to build meaningful words. Start with 3 letter words."

10. Would you explain the lesson material to her in another way than the teacher? If answered "yes", explain how.

- * "Yes."

- * "Show her an example of the letter."
- * "Ask her where to start writing."
- * "She must fill in some parts of the address, body and conclusion of the letter."
- * "Flash cards."
- * "Drill work."
- * "Word and picture."
- * "Transcription."
- * "Observe first and say what you see."
- * "Find out what fore knowledge [sic] is."
- * "Work in groups."
- * Unanswered
- * "No."

11. With what approaches of techniques would you assist her?

- * "Observe her models. Check laterality. Use flash cards and pictures."
- * "Create a song about the sound. Show pictures that go along with the sound."
- * "Use a play method. Give her a lot of reading material to read. She must write her own short passage and read it to herself."
- * "Individual remedial classes. Praise the learner whenever there is an improvement."

12. Which language, reading and writing difficulties would you assist her with?

- * "Observation, speaking, listening and writing."
- * "Choose materials and books that are suitable and easy for her. Give her a lot of written work from what she has read."
- * "Use a tape recorder to record the learner while reading in order for her to listen to how she reads. Select materials in which language has a natural flow, repetition, rhythm and rhymes. Build her vocabulary by directing to lessons or objects in the environment."

These results are now discussed.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

4.4.1 General aspects

If the results quoted above are compared with the possible correct answers in paragraph 2.2.3 above, it is evident that some questions are correctly answered by the educators, while in other questions some correct answers are omitted. This is discussed in more detail.

Only one Grade 3 educator mentioned praising the learner whenever the learner achieves. Praise is an indispensable part of encouragement. Praise empowers the learner with a sense of self worth and self-confidence to further explore new ventures.

When the educators mentioned group work, no declaration of how learners are clustered into groups was made. One group of equally weak and struggling learners will not enhance the learning situation. The educators did not mention the wrong seating of the learners in the groups. Some of the learners were sitting with their backs towards the board and Karabo herself was sitting edgewise facing the board. When learners experience difficulties, they should ideally be seated in the front of the class. No mentioning was made of this. Learners with difficulties are easily distracted and therefore find it more difficult to concentrate and focus when seated in groups, in the middle or the back of the classroom. To quote Killen (1989:vi) "Educators have a crucial role to play in allowing learners to be involved in their own learning. Teaching and learning strategies describe the ways in which educators apply skills, techniques and styles". Schlebusch and Thobedi (2005:308) belief that educators should aim to apply a variety of teaching strategies to allo learners to demonstrate the learning they have mastersd. On such strategy is to enlarge collaboratively in pairs or groups. The educator facilitates and guides the process while learners provide outputs such as dialogues, role-plays and games.

Besides seating arrangements another imperative factor is the visibility of the blackboard. This should be clearly visible to all learners. This was of no concern to the educators involved in this research.

Some educators mentioned eye problems, fine motor co-ordination problems, laterality and directionality, auditory perception and memory difficulties in the learners. Other physical aspects including crossing the mid-line, speech and articulation ability, the general health status of the learner and several other physical aspects, received no awareness.

No educator mentioned the importance of first ensuring that one concept is mastered before continuing to the next step. This is vital for learning and should be of significance when teaching those who display language difficulties.

4.4.2 Aspects of Behaviour

The educators noticed that the learner experiences difficulties with concentration. They mentioned that the learner looks around, looks bored and fidgets with her bookcase or chair. No mention is made of other learners clowning around or distracting the learner on the video. Erasing work on a regular basis, as the learner feels unsure of what she is doing, did not receive any attention from the educators.

Several possible correct answers to all the questions pertaining to behaviour are omitted in the educators' answers.

4.4.3 Aspects of Language: Reading, Writing and Oral

4.4.3.1 Writing difficulties

Letter reversals such as 'w' instead of 'm' were observed. Omission of letters, wrong word order, incorrect spacing between letters and incorrect copying from the board was mentioned. Some educators observed incorrect letter formation and writing for long periods of time without comprehension. Poor handwriting received little attention.

In the light of the above, it is clear that some of the educators are aware of some of the writing difficulties that can be experienced by all learners as well as the learner on the video, but they seem to lack the ability or knowledge to explain in detail the exact writing difficulties observed. They are also probably not aware of the outcomes expected in Grade 3 as described in chapter 2 and in the paragraph above about the possible correct answers. It may also be that the educators do not recognise the manifestation

of writing difficulties, or are not aware of the assessment standards for Grade 3, because they do not indicate it as such on the questionnaire.

4.4.3.2 Reading difficulties

No mention was made of the specific difficulties experienced by the learner, such as wrong letter identification, wrong letter discrimination, poor letter / sound correspondence, wrong letter order in words, eye problems or poor language. Some educators did answer that the learner should attend remedial classes, but no specific reading difficulties or reading strategies for the support of the reading difficulties were indicated.

Some educators wrote about some other possible approaches or techniques, so they apparently are aware of such alternative ways of instruction for learners who experience difficulty

It is clear that educators in the Foundation Phase specifically Grade 3, need in-service training regarding learners with spelling difficulties. They need to be made aware of various remediation methods.

4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter dealt with the following:

- Methodology
- Empirical results
- Discussion of the results

From the main results it is clear that the educators do have some knowledge of language difficulties, but not in detail, and that they do not know how to identify, assess and support learners who experience spelling difficulties.

In chapter 5 the findings and recommendations are presented.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to establish what is the knowledge of Grade 3 educators in the North-West Province about the identification and support of spelling difficulties, specifically in terms of the following:

- The educators' knowledge of spelling difficulties learners may experience in Grade 3.
- Educators' skill in the identification of these difficulties as they manifest in learners' behaviour in Grade 3.
- Knowledge about assessment procedures and techniques for the assessment of these difficulties.
- Knowledge about support techniques for these difficulties.

5.2 SUMMARY

In **chapter 1** an introduction to the study was given, from which the problem statement as well as aims of the study followed. The proposed methodology for the research was outlined, definitions of terms were presented and the programme of the study was indicated.

In **chapter 2** the education dispensation of the Literacy Learning Area in South Africa's Foundation Phase (FP) was discussed in terms of both Home and First Additional Languages for the FP. The Language and Literacy Programme (LLP) in the FP was discussed, in terms of the development of skills, knowledge, values and attitudes, and the enabling of learners to communicate effectively in spoken or written / visual format (SA, 2003:24). The six Language Learning Outcomes were described as central to the creation and interpretation of oral, written or visual texts. Learning Outcomes 1 and 2 (Listening and Speaking) are always grouped together, Learning Outcomes 3 and 4 (Reading and viewing, and Writing) are often linked, while Learning Outcomes 5 and 6 (Thinking and Reasoning, and Language Structure and

Use) are integrated, to provide the knowledge base necessary for performing well in the Foundation Phase. Assessment was discussed in terms of the assessment standards and assessment strategies proposed for the Foundation Phase. A comparison between the Assessment Standards for Learning Outcome 4 (Writing) in the Home and First Additional Language Learning Areas respectively was presented.

In **chapter 3** language and spelling development, the manifestation of spelling difficulties (identification), and spelling assessment and support were described.

In **chapter 4** the methodology and results of the empirical research were presented. The chapter deals with the research design, which comprises the method of research and the measuring instrument. Possible correct answers to the questionnaire are given. The results of the questionnaires are presented and discussed in comparison to the possible correct answers and the writing outcomes of the FP.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

Inclusive education is undoubtedly broader than the old special needs education programme concept. The initial success of mainstreaming will be measured by the extent to which the schools practise, encourage and accommodate diverse learning and learners. The most common obstacles that schools face in furthering the goals was the main aim of this study. It was to determine what knowledge and skills educators in the Foundation Phase in the North-West Province possess concerning the identification of learners' difficulties in spelling, with Tswana as medium of instruction but possibly as first additional language.

- The results of the empirical study indicate that the educators do not adequately describe how spelling difficulties can be identified, assessed and supported; some possible correct answers were omitted. According to these results of the empirical study it is evident that the Grade 3 educators at these three particular schools in Potchefstroom do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to identify and support learners who experience language and spelling difficulties. This confirms the literature results in chapter 2, that many teachers in South Africa are unsure of the conceptual fields in which they work, and require specified guidance concerning the appropriate content and task standards they are supposed to teach and assess. Rassool *et al.* (2006:543) states that

“mainstream teachers needed to understand the principles underpinning language support so that they, in turn, could apply these principles. In many cases mainstream teachers abdicated responsibility for bilingual pupils, with the result that, once more, children were expected to sink or swim”. According to Taylor and Vinjold (1999:202) the assessment skills of many teachers are rudimentary – teachers rarely apply assessment techniques beyond simple memory tests. Learners are seldom encouraged to ask questions themselves, peer interactions on content knowledge are rare; individual reading is almost nonexistent, and written work is sparse and hardly ever goes beyond single words. This relates to the OBE approach where educators need to change from an educator-centred approach to a learner-centred approach (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2005:308; Van Schalkwyk, 2001:3; Rassool *et al.*, 2006:546).

In the light of the above it is clear that some educators are aware of the writing difficulties experienced by Grade 3 learners but often lack the ability or knowledge to explain in detail the exact writing difficulties as identified, neither do they know how these difficulties can be further assessed and supported. Brooks (1995:39) states and is supported by Van Schalkwyk (2001:3) that a dual responsibility exists regarding the proper teaching and learning of an additional language in schools: both educators and learners have to take responsibility of developing the additional language skills of learners by, amongst others communication in the language. “We believe that proper communication in the additional language is a way of promoting intelligent, creative and lateral thinking in the classroom. If not, the inability of learners to use the additional language effectively in the classroom will hamper their competency in communication and ultimately their academic performance in all other learning areas”.

No educator considered the fact that Tswana probably is a first additional language for the learner on the video, which could be the cause of the learner’s general confusion. To quote Kasambira (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2005:309) when stating the strong persistence of chalk and talk teaching, where the educator does most of the talking and the learners merely listen, allows for very little classroom participation and active involvement of the learners. The lack of active involvement in class activities by learners may have a negative effect on their acquisitions of the first additional

language as they are denied opportunities to express themselves in the language they are learning.

It needs to be stated, however, that these empirical results can only be applicable to the three specific schools (educators) selected in this sample, and not to the whole North-West Province. Other schools and educators may present different results from this sample, due to various other factors applicable to those schools.

The conclusions from the literature can be summarised in the following:

- Educators have already raised the alarming opinion that they are experiencing confusion as to exactly what they should be teaching; teachers even ask whether they need to be teaching reading and writing at all (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2005:309, 311, 312; Matjila & Pretorius, 2004:16).
- Some educators admit that they do not like to read. This implies that educators themselves may have a poor grasp of the learning areas they teach, as well as a poor comprehension of learners who experience reading and spelling difficulties, possibly because they experience the same difficulties themselves. Because they do not read themselves, teachers give learners little opportunity to read because reading is not important to the educator. The educators do not see the importance of teaching how to read and write in the classroom (Matjila & Pretorius, 2004:17). According to Schlebusch and Thobedi (2005:309, 313) educators may also not engage fully in the acclaimed OBE approach to teaching and learning. Resistance by many educators to change their approach to teaching has a negative influence on learners in the classroom.
- Some educators ask for practical classroom demonstrations – live or video's – of actual lesson plans and practical support materials. They appear to be in the same need for support as the learners in their classes. One must remember according to Rassool *et al.* (2006:543) especially in the rural areas and townships, the main exposure to the additional language is in the classrooms where teachers' competence in the language may be limited.

In the light of these results from the empirical and literature research, the following recommendations can be suggested.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Recommendations for the Department of Education

Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education – Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education 2001) occupies a special place in the development of education policy in the post-1994 period. (1) it represents the completion of the grand policy-making processes for the main education sub-sectors. (2) Because of its location at the tail end of the policy-making process, it suggests a retrospective revision of all the main education sub-sector policies to bring these in line with the concepts of inclusive education. (3), no other education policy in the post-1994 era has been as clear and critical about the status quo and how it contributes to the further marginalisation and exclusion of learners, especially in the public ordinary schooling system. As the focus in an inclusive education system is on the adaptation of the system to serve the needs of the learners, all the departments of education as well as the educators need to make the necessary adaptations in the system and in teacher training, rather than blame the learners' difficulties or the causes thereof for poor learner performances. The National and Provincial departments of education may need to pay attention to the following:

- Educators need support from the departments of education in terms of providing applicable training and support materials in schools for the support of learners who experience difficulties. The departments should consider regular in-service training for educators in the identification and support of learners who experience any difficulty, not only spelling difficulties. It seems that the educators don't fully understand the shift in orientation required by the RNCS. For some educators the RNCS seems like a complete overhaul of the education and training system. Educators must be informed towards their roles within the new type of learning environment. President Mandela appealed to the international community to assist South Africa with the reskilling of, and support for, educators. Against this background the PEI was established and critical areas were identified, but still educators are in the dark.
- Pre-service training should include modules on learners who experience difficulties in class, so that prospective educators will be equipped to identify

and support such learners in their classes. Educators need to conceptualise a strategic campaign and integration strategy for the inclusive education system.

- An alternative training approach can be for educators to learn the African language which is the dominant home language in the schools where they teach.
- The Department could consider the use of an assistant in a classroom who can speak or interpret the home language of the majority of the learners, and who could assist in the identification and support of learners who experience difficulties in class.
- Because of the language differences the Department can consider having bridging classes for non-English speakers, for both learners and their educators.
- Allocating substantial resources to promoting bilingualism. The following steps would be needed to promote this course: (1) advocating the advantages of additive bilingualism (2) the provision of books and materials in the indigenous languages in South Africa and ensuring that teachers in the lower primary are fluent in the primary languages of the pupils in their classes (Alexander, 1999:12)
- Accepting the growing use of English as language of instruction at all levels of the schools system and promoting the conditions requisite for effective teaching and learning through English (Alexander, 1999:12)
- The following conditions are most frequently quoted in international research as important for instruction in a second language: (1) teachers' language proficiency in the target language (2) teachers' competence as language teachers with an understanding of problems of learning in a second language and how to overcome these (3) exposure to the target language outside the classroom (3) the provision of graded language textbooks especially in the content subjects in the early phases of learning (Alexander, 1999:12).
- The government needs to obtain information on the appropriate class sizes.
- They can aim to change school SGB's and the broader community's attitudes regarding issues that affect the additional language from an integral part of the implementation strategy.

- Educators need human resources development strategies to help them cope with increased teaching challenges.

5.4.2 Recommendations for educators

The following recommendations are suggested towards all Grade 3 educators who are teaching in a first or additional language, towards the promotion of language learning including spelling. Spelling should be an enjoyable activity in the classroom.

- Educators should try to involve the learners on a more regular basis during teaching and learning activities, especially in reading and writing. Learner participation and learner centered education as in OBE have proved to be more effective than teacher centered education.
- Educators should be well informed about the home languages of their learners, and that the medium of instruction in the FP may not necessarily be their home language. They should make it clear to their learners what the value of language and spelling development is, and that they should feel free to ask for support at any given time, as it is the educators' role to support and intervene. Educators should first of all be literate themselves and exhibit a positive attitude towards reading and spelling.
- Educators themselves can be more imaginative in their resources and design and make their own teaching and support materials.
- Educators should strive to have a positive attitude towards OBE in general, and towards learning to read and spell in particular.
- Educators should have a clear understanding of the teaching and learning process so that they can appropriately assess and support their learners.
- Educators' should have print rich classrooms for enhancing literacy.
- It would seem that modernisation in South Africa and, the inexorable urbanisation in particular, is undermining the possibilities for the first alternative and that the more realistic opinion is a straight for English approach, except in linguistically homogenous classes where there is little exposure to English outside the classroom or where parents expressly request an alternative (Alexander, 1999:13).

5.4.3 Recommendations for further research

- The results of this study should be tested against a larger target group and in all the other provinces and languages.
- Are the barriers of learning intrinsic or extrinsic
- It should be determined whether Home Language instruction in the Foundation Phase in South Africa really is home language instruction and not instruction in an additional language.
- Examine the minimum requirements for successful teaching in a first additional language in South African schools – the teachers' language competence, the books and materials required, the most effective ways of bridging the learners' language and other possible forms of support.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Educators do not all have the knowledge and skill to identify and support barriers to learning. Learners in the Foundation Phase in South African schools may not achieve the outcomes of the FP if they experience barriers, specifically in Home language instruction, and even more so if they are not really receiving instruction in their home language. Learners may be prevented from achieving their potential if they fail in the Foundation Phase already.

Every child's right to basic education is secured in the South African Constitution. However, in the past not enough has been done to ensure this right is realised for the most marginalised of children, for example, children with disabilities. The rights perspective is a key motivation factor driving the adoption of the new inclusion model in South Africa (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2003:316-317; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:304). The right to learn has to a certain extent been achieved and the large majority of South African learners now have access to schooling. The immediate priority must be to get learning and instruction right so that learner progress through the school system can be substantially improved.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ALEXANDER, N. 1999. English unassailable but unattainable: the dilemma of language policy in South African education. (Paper presented at the Biennial Conference of the International Federation for the Teaching of English, University of Warwick, England, UK, July 7-10, 1999.) <http://www.nyu.edu/education/teachlearn/ifte/war99.htm>. Date of access: 23 October 2006.

ALEXANDER, N. 2003. Language policy, symbolic power and the democratic responsibility of the post-apartheid university. *Pretexts, literacy and cultural studies*, (12)2:197-190.

BAKER, C. 1997. Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.

BEARD, R. 1999. National literacy strategy: review of research and other related evidence. London: DfEE.

BENGU, S. 1997. Statement by Prof SME Bengu, Minister of Education on the new language policy in general and further education. (*In* Brown, E., ed. Educational policy and the choice of language in linguistical complex South African schools. Durban: Education Policy Unit. (p. 38)

BROOKS, G. 1995. Black English. *English teaching forum*, 33(1):38-40.

BROWN, D. 1998. Educational policy and the choice of language in linguistically complex South Africa schools. Durban: Education Policy Unit, University of Natal.

CHEMINAIS, R. 2002. Inclusion and school improvement: a practical guide. London: Fulton.

CULATTA, R.A., TOMPKINS, J.R. & WERTS, M.G. 2003. Fundamentals of special education: what every teacher needs to know. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill Prentice Hall.

CUMMINS, J. 1984. Bilingualism and special education: issues in assessment and pedagogy. Clevedon, Avon.: Multilingual Matters.

DAWES, A. & DONALD, D. 1994. Childhood and adversity in South Africa. Cape Town: David Phillip.

DELPORT, C.S.L. 2002. Steps unique to the quantitative process, v. 1: Quantitative data collection methods. (*In* De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. Research at grass roots for the social sciences and human service professions. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

DONALD, D., LAZARUS, S. & LOLWANA, P. 2002. Educational psychology in social context. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

DRISCOLL, P. & FROST, D. 1999. The teaching of modern foreign languages in the primary school. London: Routledge.

DU TOIT, P. 1996. 'n Remediëringsmodel vir die onderwyser in hoofstroomonderwys. Pretoria: Universiteit van Pretoria. (Proefskrif - DPhil.)

ELOFF, F., LOOTS, T. & MEIJ, A. 2003. ALL-IN-ONE teacher's guide Grade 3. Learning programmes: Literacy, numeracy and life skills. Johannesburg: Best Books Panel, Creda Communications.

FRAZER, W.J. & MAREE, J.G. 2004. Outcome-based assessment. Sandown: Heinemann.

FREDERICKSON, N. & CLINE, T. 2002. Special educational needs: inclusion and diversity. Buckingham: Open University Press.

GALL, M.D., GALL, J.P. & BORG, W.R. 2003. Educational research an introduction. Boston, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon.

GILIOME, J.H., & SCHLEMMER, L., ALEXANDER, N., DU PLESSIS, B. & LOUBSER, M., *reds.* 2001. Kruispad: Die toekoms van Afrikaans as openbare taal. [Crossroads: The future of Afrikaans as a public language.] Cape Town: Tafelberg.

HARTAS, D. 2005. Language and communication difficulties. London: Continuum.

- JONES, R. & WYSE, D. 2001. Teaching English language and literacy. New York: Routledge / Falmer.
- JOUBERT, A. 2004. Pandor maak 'n boks oop . *Beeld*: 8, 1 Julie.
- KILLEN, R. 1998. Effective teaching strategies. Sydney: Social Science Press.
- LE GRANGE, L. & REDDY, C. 1998. Continuous assessment: an introduction and guidelines to implementation. Kenwyn: Juta.
- LEEDY, P.D. & OMROD, J.E. 2005. Practical research planning and design. 8th ed. Hillside, N.J.: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.
- LERNER, W.J. 1989. Learning disabilities theories, diagnosis, and teaching strategies. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin.
- LERNER, W.J. 2006. Learning disabilities and related disorders. Characteristics and teaching strategies. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin.
- LOMOFSKY, L. & LAZARUS, S. 2001. South Africa: first steps in the development of an inclusive education system. *Cambridge journal of education*, 31(3), 303-317.
- LOWENBERG, E. & LUCAS, E. 1996. The right way. A guide for parents and teachers to encourage visual learners. Pinetown: Kohler Cartons & Print.
- MALCOLM, C. 2001. Implementation of outcomes-based approaches to education in Australia and South Africa. (In Jansen, J. & Yusaf, S., eds. Implementing education policies: the South African experience. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press. p. 200-239.)
- MASTROPIERI, M.A. & SCRUGGS, T.E. 2004. The inclusive classroom. Strategies for effective instruction. 2nd ed. Hillside, N.J.: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- MATJILA, D.E. & PRETORIUS, E.J. 2004. Bilingual and biliterate? An exploratory study of grade 8 reading skills in Setswana and English. *Per linguam*, 20(1):1-21.
- MONTGOMERY, D. 1997. Spelling: remedial strategies. London: Cassell. (Special needs in ordinary schools.)

MUTHUKRISHNA, A., SCHOEMAN, M., NTOMBELA, T. & JAIRAJ, S. 2000. Developing sustainable inclusive educational policy and practice in South Africa. (Unpublished report to UNESCO.) Durban: University of Natal, Faculty of Education. <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00003332.htm> Date of access: 22 September 2006.

NAICKER, S.M. 1999. Curriculum 2005. A space for all: an introduction to inclusive education. Cape Town: Tafelberg.

NIEMAN, M.M. & MONYAI, R.B. 2006. The educator as mediator of learning. Pretoria: Unisa.

NIND, M., RIX, J., SHEEHY, K. & SIMMONS, K. 2005. Curriculum and pedagogy in inclusive education. Values into practice. New York: Routledge Falmer.

OOSTHUIZEN, I.J., VAN DER WALT, J.L. & FRYER, M.M. 2006. The nature and frequency of the discipline problems with which educators have to cope in a region of the North-West Province of South Africa. Potchefstroom: North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus.

PRINSLOO, E. 2001. Working towards inclusive education in South African classrooms. *South African journal of education*, 21(4):344.

RADEMEYER, A. 2004a. The language abilities of learners', is very poor and needs to be addressed. *Beeld*: 1, 21 Januarie.

RADEMEYER, A. 2004b. Die wet van onbedoelde gevolge. *Beeld*: 1, 2 Junie.

RADEMEYER, A. 2005c. Huistaal = presteer, se DG. *Beeld*: 2, 17 May.

RASSOOL, N. 2004. Sustaining linguistic diversity within the global cultural economy: Issues of language rights and linguistic possibilities. *Comparative education*, (40)2:200-214, May.

RASSOOL, N., EDWARDS, V. & BLOCH, C. 2006. Language and development in multilingual settings: a case study of knowledge exchange and teacher education in South Africa. Unesco Institute of Education. *International review of education*, 52:532-552, December.

RUMBERGER, R.W. & LEVIN, H. 1984. Forecasting the impact of new technologies on the future of the job market. Project Report No. 84-A4. Institute for Research on Educational Finance and Governance. Stanford, Calif.: School of Education, Stanford: University Press.

SCHLEBUSCH, G. & THOBEDI, M. 2005. Linking English first additional language teaching and learning with outcomes-based education: what is really happening? *Journal of language teaching*, 39(2):306-319

SA **see** SOUTH AFRICA. Department of Education.

SACTE **see** SOUTH AFRICAN COLLEGE FOR TEACHER EDUCATION
REMEDIAL EDUCATION.

SKUTNABB-KANGAS, T. 1981. Bilingualism or not: the education of minorities. Clevedon, Avon.: Multilingual Matters.

SOUTH AFRICA. Department of Education. 1996. The South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996). *Government Gazette*, 337, No. 17479.

SOUTH AFRICA. Department of Education. 1997a. Language in education policy. Pretoria: Department of Education.

SOUTH AFRICA. Department of Education. 1997b. Medium-term expenditure framework: Report of the Educational Sectoral Team. Pretoria: Department of Education.

SOUTH AFRICA. Department of Education. 1998a. Assessment policy in the general education and training bond, Grades R to 9 and ABET. *Government Gazette*, 402, No. 19460.

SOUTH AFRICA. Department of Education. 1998b. Language-in-education implementation plan. *Government Gazette*, 402, No. 19460.

SOUTH AFRICA. Department of Education. 2001. LSEN Directorate. White Paper on Special Needs Education. Pretoria: Department of Education. (White paper, no.6.)

SOUTH AFRICA. Department of Education. 2002a. Draft National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 (Schools): Mathematics. Pretoria: Department of Education.

SOUTH AFRICA. Department of Education. 2002b. Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools). Policy. Languages: English-Home Language. Pretoria: Government Printer.

SOUTH AFRICA. Department of Education. 2002c. Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools). Orientation guide. Pretoria: Government Printer.

SOUTH AFRICA. Department of Education. 2003. Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools). Teacher's Guide for the Development of Learning Programs: Foundation Phase. Overview document. Pretoria: government Printer. 17 p.

SOUTH AFRICAN COLLEGE FOR TEACHER EDUCATION REMEDIAL EDUCATION. 1998. Remedial education, REMA 21. Pretoria: South African College for Teacher Education.

SPADY, W. 1994. Outcomes based education: critical issues and answers. Arlington, Va.: American Association of School Administrators.

TAYLOR, N. & VINJEVOLD, P. 1999. Getting learning right. Report of the President's Education Initiative Research Project. Johannesburg: Wits, Joint Education Trust.

TOPPING, K. & MALONEY, S. 2005. Inclusion education. Rowbridge, Wiltshire: Cromwell Press

UYS, C.C. s.a. Leesbundel. GELG 421. Potchefstroom: Noordwes-Universiteit (Potchefstroomkampus).

VAN DEN BERG, R., SLEEGERS, P. & GEIJSEL, F. 2001. Teacher' concerns about adaptive teaching: evaluation for a support program. *Journal of curriculum and supervision*, 16(3):245-58.

VAN SCHALKWYK, M.J. 2001. Communication management and secretarial students. Parow: MJ van Schalkwyk.

WESSELS, M. & VAN DEN BERG, R. 1999. Practical guide to facilitating language learning methods, activities and techniques for OBE. Cape Town: ABC Book Printers.

WILLIG, C.J. 1990. Children's concepts and the primary curriculum. London: Chapman.

APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Permission for research in your school

Appendix B: Permission granted for research in your school

Appendix C: Permission for research in schools

Appendix D Questionnaire

Dr Mvula
District Director
Northwest Department of Education
POTCHEFSTROOM

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Tel (018) 018 299 1884

Fax (018) 018 299 1888

5 May 2004

Dear dr Mvula

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

I hereby request permission to conduct research in **30 primary schools** in Potchefstroom and district, for my research project, titled:

Outcomes-based assessment of learners with special educational needs: An in-service training programme for teachers in the Foundation phase in the Northwest Province.

A research grant was allocated to me jointly by the NRF and the University of the Northwest for this research project, which has to be executed during this present school term. The research encompasses that video tapes as well as questionnaires be presented to the Foundation phase teachers in the 30 primary schools in the Northwest Province. These teachers (**Grades 1, 2 and 3 teachers in each of these 30 schools**) will be requested to **look at the videos and fill in the questionnaires** about the learners in the videos. The **videos are about one learner each in Grade 1, 2 and 3, performing class activities in reading, writing and mathematics**. The video recordings each are more or less 20 minutes long, of each of the Grade 1, 2 and 3 learners, in an **Afrikaans, English, Tswana and Northern Sotho speaking class**.

The teachers' role in the research will entail the looking at the video recordings and filling in the questionnaire – one Grade 1 teacher in each of the 30 schools (total 30 teachers) will look at the video of a Grade 1 learner; one Grade 2 teacher in each of the 30 schools (total 30 teachers) will look at the video of a Grade 2 learner; and one Grade 3 teacher in each of the 30 schools (total 30 teachers) will look at the video of a Grade 3 learner. After watching the video, each teacher has to fill in the questionnaire about that learner's learning and classroom behaviour on the video. The aim of the watching of the videos is for the teachers to **identify any symptoms of any possible learning difficulties** from the learners' activities and written work, and to fill in corresponding questions in the questionnaire, about the specific learner's learning behaviour as evident on the video. From the answers obtained from the questionnaires I will be able to determine the teachers' present amount of knowledge and skill in identifying symptoms of learning difficulties. **The ultimate aim of the research will then be to compile an in-service training programme for Foundation phase teachers in the identification of learning difficulties in the classroom.**



Permission is therefore requested for the following:

- that **30 schools** are selected to take part in the research, issued to me with the names of the schools, **8 in each of the 4 mentioned mediums of teaching**, their **physical as well as postal addresses**, and their **telephone and fax numbers**.
- to conduct the research among **90 Foundation phase teachers** (3 teachers – Grade 1,2 and 3 – in each of these 30 schools) in Potchefstroom and district
- that these 30 schools have to be **representative of four language groups in the Northwest Province: English, Afrikaans, Tswana and Northern Sotho**. This means that approximately 8 schools in each of these 4 languages have to be selected – that the medium of teaching in these schools therefore have to be these 4 languages: **8 schools with English as medium, 8 schools with Afrikaans as medium, 8 schools Tswana, and 8 schools Northern Sotho**.

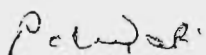
It takes about **45 minutes to watch the video and fill in the questionnaire, which the teachers can do after hours** on their own private video machines at home, or wherever they have access to video machines. **It therefore does not have to be done during school hours at all, but may be done on the school premises, after hours, if the school has video facilities available**. Some of the the 90 teachers will therefore have to be willing to **stay after school for one day only**, to watch the video and fill in the questionnaire, if they do not have private video facilities at their homes. I will mail or personally deliver the videos and questionnaires to the 90 teachers at the 30 schools, after which the videos and questionnaires have to be returned to me.

Anonymity and confidentiality is of course guaranteed, as no names of teachers or schools have to be filled in on the questionnaire. The research entails participation of **teachers only; no learners**. The aim of the research is to obtain a general indication of how teachers presently identify learning difficulties, in order to eventually design the in-service training programme for teachers. The schools will benefit from the research by contributing towards the establishment of the training programme, from which all Foundation phase teachers ultimately may benefit, to improve their knowledge and skill in the identification of learning difficulties. I also envisage that these trained teachers may ultimately become facilitators as well in their own right, in the training of their colleagues in the early identification of learning difficulties, to prevent school failure and dropout later on in learners' school careers.

I therefore request your permission on this matter urgently, in order to fulfil my financial and time-fixed obligation towards the NRF and the University of the Northwest.

Thank you for your kind consideration of my request.

Yours sincerely



PROF PETRUSA DU TOIT



Department of Education
Lefapha La Thuto
Departement van Onderwys

Private Bag X 919
Potchefstroom, 2520
Tel (018) 299 8294/99
Fax (018) 299 8290



NORTH WEST PROVINCE

SOUTHERN REGION

Enq.: M. Mveli
E-Mail mmweli@nwpg.gov.za

To : Prof. Du Toit
University of the North West

From : Mr H M Mveli
Executive Manager

Date : 11 August 2004

Subject : PERMISSSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Your correspondence to my regarding the above matter refers.

Permission is herewith granted for you to conduct research in schools as per your request. This Department will very much appreciate it if you can furnish me with a copy of the Research itself and/or a report on how you undertook the research.

Wishing you well in your endeavors.

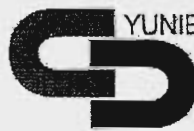
Yours sincerely

MR H M MWELI
EXECUTIVE MANAGER
SOUTHERN REGION



Re a dira mo dikolong ☐ Ons werk in ons skole ☐ We are working in our schools ☐ Re a sebetša dikolong
Sivasebenz' ezikoleni ☐ Ha tirha eswikoilweni ☐ Re a shuma zwikoioni ☐ Siya sebenta etikoleni





YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

THE PRINCIPAL
PRIMARY SCHOOL
POTCHEFSTROOM

**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
EDUCATION**

Tel (018) 018 299 1884

Fax (018) 018 299 1888

5 May 2004

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in the research project of the University of the Northwest, on the identification by Grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers of learners with learning difficulties. Permission from the Department of Education has already been obtained, and a copy of that letter is enclosed for your notice.

The research entails that one each of a Grade 1, 2 and 3 teacher in your school will watch a video of a learner with learning difficulties, and then fill in a questionnaire about the learner on the video. That means that the Gr 1 teacher will watch the video of the Gr 1 learner, the Gr 2 teacher the video of the Gr 2 learner, and the Gr 3 teacher the video of the Gr 3 learner, and thereafter each teacher fills in his/her separate questionnaire about the learner on the video that he/she has watched. It should take about 45 minutes to watch the video and fill in the questionnaire, which the teachers can do after hours on their own private video machines at home or wherever they have access to video machines. It therefore does not have to be done on the school premises, but of course it will speed up the research if your school does have video facilities available on your premises, for the teachers' use, as it is an official matter permitted by the Department of Education.

Anonymity and confidentiality is of course guaranteed, as no names of teachers or schools are mentioned anywhere. The aim of the research is to obtain a general indication of how teachers presently identify learning difficulties, in order to design an in-service training programme for teachers. Your school will benefit from the research by contributing towards the establishment of the training programme, from which all Foundation phase teachers ultimately may benefit, to improve their knowledge and skill in the identification of learning difficulties. I also envisage that these trained teachers may ultimately become facilitators as well in their own right, in the training of their colleagues in the early identification of learning difficulties, to prevent school failure and dropout later on in learners' school careers.

Enclosed please find three videos, one each of a Gr 1, 2 and 3 learner with an accompanying questionnaire on each video, which the three teachers please have to



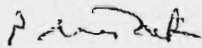
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS
Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom, South Africa, 2520
Tel: (018) 299-1111 • Fax: (018) 299-2799
Internet: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>



watch and fill in, and **return the whole package** (videos and questionnaires) in the enclosed envelope. I will arrange to deliver and fetch it personally to and from your school. I request that you be so kind to please have the teachers finish the questionnaires by (date). The successful progress of the research project is dependent on your kindly returning the package by this date.

Thank you again for your cooperation. It is highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely



prof PETRUSA DU TOIT

RESEARCHER

QUESTIONNAIRE

IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN GRADE THREE IN A TSWANA CLASS

Please look at the video of the girl in the dark sweater in the middle of the picture (Karabo). Then please answer the following questions about the possible learning difficulties you observe as experienced by her in her oral and written work in two separate lessons, namely in mathematics and in language. Images of her written work (approximately one minute per page) in each lesson will be displayed in between or at the end of each lesson. The duration of the video is 21 minutes (mathematics lesson) and 22 minutes (language lesson), thus 43 minutes in total.

MATHEMATICS

1. What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

LANGUAGE

1. What aspects in her behaviour are indicative that she is having difficulty?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Describe her style of silent reading while reading on the board to copy the work on her work sheet.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. What kind of writing errors does she make (compare her written letter on the work sheet)?

"Keagobolelela" "Ke a go bolelela"

[illegible][illegible]

.....
.....

6. With what other kind of assessment approaches or techniques would you further investigate her language difficulties?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

7. Would you explain the lesson material to her in any other way than the teacher?
(Answer "Yes" or "No")

.....

How? (If you answered "Yes")

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

8. With what approaches or techniques would you assist her with her difficulties?

.....
.....
.....