

**CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN FACILITATING THE ACQUISITION OF READING AND WRITING SKILLS BY LEARNERS, AND LEARNERS' CHALLENGES IN ACQUIRING READING AND WRITING SKILLS IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE (GRADES R – 3)**

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## DECLARATION

I, Itumeleng Pule, declare that this research project for the Degree of Master of Education at the North-West University hereby submitted, has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other University. That it is my own work in design and execution and all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

  
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**PULE ITUMELENG**

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## ABSTRACT

Teaching reading and writing skills and the acquisition of those skills is a challenge for teachers and learners respectively. Teachers encounter challenges in teaching and learners likewise encounter challenges of acquisition. The ability of learners to have the skills of reading and writing is undoubtedly one of the most important skills they need to possess. Likewise, teachers need to possess the ability to facilitate the acquisition of those skills by learners.

The study was aimed at determining from teachers what challenges they encounter in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by Foundation Phase learners, and what the learners' challenges are in acquiring those skills. A brief questionnaire with one rating scale question, a dichotomous scale and two open-ended questions was designed and administered to a convenience sample of fifty teachers from ten randomly selected primary schools in the Montshioa Stadt Cluster. In addition, a test of reading and writing literacy was administered to Grade R – 3 learners in selected schools in the cluster.

The findings from the study revealed that teachers are playing a positive role in identifying the causes of the learners' lack of acquiring reading and writing skills and managing that problem constructively. Teachers however, feel that they need further training on some aspects of reading and writing skills.

In view of the findings of the study, it is recommended that parents whose children have reading and writing problems be visited to investigate the source of the learners' problems. Parents should be requested to visit the school at the end of each term to check on children's work. Learners should be given intervention forms to fill to show that they deserve to remain in the same class.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **ORIENTATION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The capacity to read and write well is the foundation of quality education. However, teachers at the Foundation Phase of learning find it difficult to facilitate the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners and likewise, learners face challenges in the acquisition of these skills. Since the foundation of human development is laid during the child's early years and quality of education is determined in the first years that a child spends at school, it is critical that teachers in the Foundation Phase ensure that learners acquire competency in reading and writing.

Under Outcomes - Based Education, learning is divided into various phases. However, for the purposes of this study the researcher was focused on Foundation Phase. In the Foundation Phase children learn to express themselves, putting their thoughts on paper, describing and later explaining the world around them through the assistance of their teachers.

Quality education is determined in the first years that a child spends at school. The foundation of human development is laid during the child's early years. The most important period of life is the period from birth to age nine. This period is quality education's golden hour, those years in which a child is taught the fundamental skills and competencies that will enable him or her to learn and to develop a clear conception of the world. The golden hour in education begins in the Foundation Phase, Grades R to three. It is in this golden hour that a child learns to read so that in the future he/she can read to learn.

### **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

According to the Literacy Learning Programme, Grade R-3 (2003: 40) has as its main focus language acquisition and development for both home language and first additional language. This programme enables learners to think creatively, critically and reflectively and to access, process and communicate information while building the foundation for a range of additional literacies. In

this way, it supports and promotes competency in life skills and numeracy. According to Weir (2001:66), a person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing that enables him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assured. Unfortunately, most learners at Foundation Phase Grade R-3 have problems in acquiring basic skills of reading and writing. This is compounded by the fact that most teachers do not have facilitation skills to help learners acquire expected competence in reading and writing at this phase. Certain learning problems in the child might be traced back directly to the teacher. This statement is not meant to create the impression that the teacher is the sole or only factor responsible for learning problems in the child. However, teachers who are not dedicated to their task, have a great demoralizing and demotivating influence on a child. An indolent, uninspired teacher creates an uninspired atmosphere in class. Because of some changes introduced: Curriculum 2005 (OBE), the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and many others, teachers face the challenges of teaching learners reading and writing. The main problem that this study addresses concerns the challenges faced by teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION**

The following questions guided the execution of the study:

What are the challenges faced by Foundation Phase teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners?

What are the challenges faced by Foundation Phase learners in acquiring reading and writing skills?

### **1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The main aim of this study was to determine what challenges teachers experience in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and also to determine what challenges learners face in the acquisition of reading and writing skills.

## **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study will contribute towards assisting the Department of Education in North West Province to design appropriate in-service programmes to equip language teachers on facilitating reading and writing in any language in South African schools at the Foundation Phase and also develop a policy of facilitating reading and writing in this phase.

## **1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **Teacher**

A teacher is a person who teaches learners to become responsible adults. The teacher devices ways to help learners become responsible adults. The teacher devices some ways to communicate with learners. Teachers of good quality are characterised by inspiration, empathy and dedication to help learners.

The Policy Handbook for Teachers under the Norms and Standards for Teachers, (Government Gazette No. 20844, 2000) lists seven roles which characterise the term teacher:

- Learning mediator
- Leader, administrator and manager
- Assessor
- Learning area / subject/discipline/phase specialist
- Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner
- Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials

### **Foundation Phase**

This is the first phase of the General Education and Training (GET) Band, Grade R, 1, 2 3. (RNC Statements Grade R-9 (schools) Life Orientation policy, 2002: 61)

## **Revised National Curriculum Statement**

This is the revised version of curriculum 2005, which has been strengthened and streamlined. (Revised National Curriculum Statement Grade R-9 (schools) life orientation policy, 2002: 61.)

## **Curriculum 2005**

Curriculum 2005 is the first version of the post-apartheid National Curriculum Statement; it was a 1997 education policy document which gives a framework for early childhood development, general education and training and adult basic education and training (Revised National Curriculum Statement Grade R-9 (school) Life Orientation Policy, 2002: 61).

## **Outcomes-Based Education**

Outcomes-Based Education is an approach that requires teachers and learners to focus on the desired end results of education (Kramer, 2006: 1) whether formal, non-formal or informal.

## **Curriculum**

Curriculum is everything planned by the teachers that will help to develop the learners. It can be a debate or a visit to the library and sporting activities. When planning the curriculum, the planner must consider the physical resources, techniques, methods of teaching and sporting activities (Doll, 1992: 54).

## **1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study was restricted to primary schools in the Montshioa Cluster of Rekopantswe Area Project Office. The study involved only Grades R-3 teachers and Grades R-3 learners.

## **1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

It is important to point out that this study is limited in several ways. Firstly, the data are from a convenience sample of teachers. The sample size is small and limited to one cluster, thus producing a restricted dataset. The findings should therefore be treated as tentative and not necessarily generalisable to all Grade R-3 teachers or all Grade R-3 learners. The findings would

be more representative if a larger sample is used. However, notwithstanding these limitations, an important finding is that teachers need good training in the facilitation of the acquisition of reading and writing skills by Grade R-3 learners.

## **1.9 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED DURING THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

Some teachers thought that the intentions of the research were to find faults, hence they were reluctant to answer the questionnaire. Some took a long time to complete and return the questionnaire, because of this I was unable to work according to my planned programme.

It was difficult to get some teachers in their schools and this prolonged the data collection time. Some teachers were absent from schools, others were at workshops and other teachers misplaced the questionnaire and were given new copies.

## **1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

### **Chapter One**

This chapter deals with the background, orientation, introduction and statement of the problem.

### **Chapter Two**

This chapter focuses on a review of the literature related to the acquisition of reading and writing skills at the Foundation Phase (Grade R-3).

### **Chapter Three**

This chapter deals with the research design and methodology. The researcher reports on the empirical investigation conducted to study the challenges faced by teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase.

### **Chapter Four**

Chapter four reflects on data analysis and interpretation.

## **Chapter five**

The final chapter presents the summary of the findings, recommendations and conclusion.

### **1.11 SUMMARY**

Chapter One has outlined the problem identification, purpose and aim of the study and its organisation.

The chapter that follows is the chapter on literature review. This focuses on the theories and empirical findings that relate to the variables of interest based on the problems realised by learners in developing reading and writing skills and the teachers problems encountered in facilitating reading and writing skills.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section discusses the theoretical framework of the study and the literature related to this study including studies undertaken in this area.

#### 2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Learners in the Foundation Phase, age seven to eleven, are regarded as being in the concrete-operations period. In this stage children become capable of performing true operations once these are directly related to objects. Concrete learning does not mean the child sees or touches the actual objects as he or she works through a problem but rather that the problem involves identifiable objects that are either directly perceived or imagined (Piaget, 1952:55).

It is during these years that children's understanding of conservation matures. The term conservation, according to Piaget (1952:55), refers to those aspects or events that remain constant when other changes are produced in objects or situations. When a ball of clay is rolled into a sausage shape, the form has been altered but the substance, weight and mass have been conserved. The difference between what has been changed and what has been conserved during transformation marks a major advance in children's reasoning skills during this stage.

By the end of the concrete operations period, that is, at the end of the Foundation Phase period children have markedly increased their abilities to account for the cause of physical events like reading and writing which are not only involving objects as the problems but also ones concerning hypothesis and prepositions about relationships.

In many of the analyses of teaching methodology based on Piagetian theory, the two most basic responsibilities of the teacher are those of diagnosing the current stage of a child's mental

development and offering the child learning activities that challenge him or her to advance to the next higher step in the sequence of sensory motor cognitive development.

### **2.2.1 The Behaviour of Foundation Phase Learners**

Foundation Phase learners come to school with an eagerness to learn. They arrive and are able to understand and speak the language used at home. They can solve mathematical-type problems even if they are not yet able to count, for example, they can match and share. They bring with them their own experiences, strengths and barriers. Each learner has the need to be recognised and accepted and for his family and culture to be acknowledged and respected. They have the need to feel safe and are easily intimidated by an unpleasant atmosphere which prevents them from learning effectively. They also feel safe when a daily outline of events is followed (Piaget, 1952:30).

They need to be given sufficient time to complete a task thus preventing them from becoming nervous. They cannot concentrate on a task for too long and are easily distracted finding themselves as passive participants in the learning process. Young learners need to be involved in the solving of problems, constructing objects, measuring, comparing and reasoning activities and they should be encouraged to explain their actions and thinking at their level.

Their task need is to fit their abilities, that is, learning is not promoted by tasks that are either too simple or too difficult. Both lead to discipline problems and the latter to a sense of helplessness and fear. Learners in this phase are usually still egocentric and assess and evaluate things and situations subjectively. They cannot assess very objectively even when given set criteria and are very dependent on peer approval. The three learning programmes should reinforce one another by drawing on the concepts and skills development in each area. The Literacy Learning Programme from Grade R to 3 has as its main focus language acquisition and language development. It enables learners to think creatively, critically and reflectively and to access, process and communicate information while building the foundation for a range of additional literacy.

## **2.3 PERTINENT LITERATURE**

Although many individuals argue that reading and writing are similar in terms of the skills, strategies and cognitive processes they involve, some authors such as Shanahan (2004:28) disagree. Shanahan (2004:38) does not consider the two to be all that similar, suggesting that children need opportunity to be taught both. He argues that learners do not become competent in writing only through reading instruction, nor do they become readers only through writing instruction. Learners need both reading and writing opportunities so that these skills can enhance the development of each other.

### **2.3.1. Reading and Writing**

Reading is any event in which the child performs reading like behaviours in relation to books, magazines or printed material either with or without a partner, in silence or with accompanying talk (Weir, 2001:66). Writing on the other hand, is a system of the linguistic characteristics of written language. Written language must convey its meanings without face to face contact, must be more explicit, is usually non-interactive, more planned and less spontaneous and relies on punctuation and other written features such as capitalisation or fonts to show its effects. Writers have to predict responses or misunderstandings and must be much more aware of the needs of the readers (Bishop, 2001:110). For many children learning to write means adding English to their repertoire. Writing is almost always conducted in Standard English.

### **2.3.2 Introducing Reading and Writing from Grade R to Grade 3**

Teachers who create literature environments in their classrooms don't treat literacy as a subject having a specific scheduled period. Language is an integral part for the learning environment and reading and writing opportunities should abound throughout each day. Teachers should work to infuse reading and writing instruction in the study of literature and content area subjects (Moyles, 2002:35). Writing and reading activities can vary in purpose, requirements and audience for both literature texts and content area text.

### **2.3.3 Making Reading and Writing Connection Explicit**

Teaching a particular reading or writing skill does not guarantee that either one will transfer to actual applications. Learners need explicit or direct instruction in reading and writing as well as close supervision by the teacher for learning to occur. They also need to understand when to use a skill. Reading and writing instruction can be simultaneous showing learners the specific purpose of and the relationships between the two subjects. Learners learn much about the nature and structure of writing through instruction in the grammar process of writing patterns and expository writing patterns of stories and through other reading instruction that focuses on text processing learning. These aspects of reading enable learners to better use them in writing styles. Younger learners often pattern their writing after books they have read or listened to (Joyce, 2002:148). After reading, other learners would usually model the story language in their writing. Literacy aspects, such as characterisation, irony, foreshadowing, dialogue and sarcasm that teachers focus on in their reading programmes also are modelled for learners to use in their own writing.

### **2.3.4 Teach Reading and Writing in a Meaningful Context**

The different functions of children's language can be used strategically for teaching reading and writing in a meaningful context. Teachers can explore and develop these functions by integrating reading and writing. They can have learners write explanations of text, rewrite text, prepare lists, write directions, write and evaluate advertising aimed at encouraging consumer use, write and edit a class newspaper, write books and stories, group meetings and plan schedules. The central point for teachers to consider is that learners must have opportunities to integrate reading and writing in a variety of literacy experiences (Smith, 2007: 36).

### **2.3.5 Letter- Word Identification**

This requires children to identify symbols, letters and words. Children should have plenty of opportunities to make marks and write through meaningful activities. Through participation in purposeful writing tasks, children will improve their written skills and move along the learning continuum. Although there are stages of writing that the children move through, it is important to note that even if they are at the stage of mark-making they are still able to write for a variety of purposes. The different stages children move through to become confident and competent writers in this area of the curriculum include among other things: mark making, making unexplained

scribbles, making explained scribbles, modelling writing, making lists and notes, writing simple sentences using word books and dictionaries, writing simple sentences with capital letters, full stops, question marks and writing short stories or writing for a variety of purposes (Walker, 2006: 26).

### **2.3.6 Putting Language into Writing**

What is it that a child learns when he or she learns to write? Learns to read? In responding to these questions one concentrates on the problems experienced by children at an early stage as the control of the writing implement, concentration and attention span, spelling, letter formation, forming the focus of attention. Here the approach is broadly a literacy one, with the emphasis firmly on creative writing. The questions asked about literary and aesthetic quality of the writing are whether it is good writing or not, does it show quality judged by criteria which are derived from the study of great writings. Other approaches closely aligned with these concerns, are broadly psychological, for instance, the author might focus on a piece of writing which tells whether the writing is sincere or not (Weir, 2001: 65).

The second question is about what we can learn about children, society and ourselves, looking at the processes of reading and writing. Here emphasis is firmly about language and the connections of language and the processes of writing, thinking and perceiving. The forms of written language which children use at different stages point to cognitive models which are distinctive in their characters and have independence and validity of their own. There are close connections between language, social structure and writing. The written language is close to the standard language accepted by a community so that some social dialect from the grammar of the written language is close to what the community is used to. This is important for the learning of writing. Access to writing is not equally available to all members of society. Furthermore, the kinds of writing which children are taught and learn to produce at school may provide an insight into the value system of our societies, particularly given the fact that few children grow up to be writers in any significant sense of the word. The problems of handwriting, letter-formation, spelling, and punctuation have received attention as matters which need to be taught when children first learn to write (Weir, 2001: 66).

### **2.3.7 The Role of Extensive Reading in Language Learning**

Krashen (1982: 54) argues that extensive reading will lead to language acquisition, provided that certain precautions are met. These include adequate exposure to the language, interesting material, relaxed, and tension free environment. Paran (1996: 34) emphasised the importance of extensive reading in providing learners with practice in automaticity of word recognition and decoding the symbol on the printed page. School children are provided with high interest story books, revealed significant post treatment gains in word recognition and reading comprehension after the first year and wider gains in oral and written skills after two years.

Browne (2007:21) claims that children between Grades three and twelve learn up to 3000 words a year and it is thought that only a small percentage of such learning is due to direct vocabulary instruction, the remainder being due to acquisition of words from reading. Manzo (2004:5), reviews a number of first language studies that appear to show the positive effect of reading on subjects' writing skills, indicating that learners who are prolific readers in their pre-college years become better writers when they enter college.

Reading materials selected for extensive reading programmes should address learners' needs, tastes and interest so as to recognise and motivate them to read the books. This can be achieved through the use of familiar material and popular titles reflecting the local culture (Campbell, 2002:45). It can consolidate previously learned language while extensive reading of high interest material for both children and adults offers the potential for reinforcing and recombining language learned in the classroom. Graded learners have a controlled grammatical and lexical load and provide regular and sufficient repetition of new language forms (Mill, 2005: 71). Therefore, learners automatically receive the necessary reinforcement and recycling of language required to ensure that new input is retained and made available for spoken and written production.

Extensive reading helps to build confidence with extended texts; much classroom reading work has traditionally focused on the exploitation of shorts texts, presenting lexical and grammatical points for providing learners with limited practice in various reading skills and strategies. Manzo (2004:06) points to the value of extensive reading in developing learners' confidence and ability in

facing longer texts. It encourages the exploitation of textual redundancy. Insights from cognitive psychology have informed our understanding of the way the brain functions in reading. It is now generally understood that slow, word by word reading, which is common in classrooms, impedes comprehension by transferring an access of visual signals to the brain. This leads to overload because only a fraction of these signals need to be processed for the reader to successfully interpret the message and refer to redundancy as an important means of processing and to extensive reading as the means of recognising and dealing with redundant elements in texts (Manzo, 2004: 6-7).

According to Mill (2005: 71) extensive reading facilitates the development of prediction skills and one of the currently accepted perspectives on the reading process is that it involves the exploitation of background knowledge. Such knowledge is seen as providing a platform for readers to predict the content of a text on the basis of a pre-existing schema. When learners read these schemas, for example diagrams, pictures are activated and help the reader to decode and interpret the message beyond the printed words. These processes presuppose that readers predict, sample, hypothesise and re-organise their understanding of the message and it unfolds while reading.

### **2.3.8 Methods of Reading Instruction**

There are various methods of reading instruction described in the literature, commonly known as the *phonics method*, the *look and say method* and the *combined method* which is a combination of the first two methods. In the phonic method learners first learn different phonics and then combine them into words, while the whole word method focuses on the total picture of a word. The combined reading method is a blending of the whole word method and the phonic method and consequently implies the perceptual function of analysing and synthesising of words (Browne, 2007:52).

### **2.3.9 Reading and Writing Acquisition and Language Difference**

Bialystok (2001:22) says:

Although dialect differences exist in this country, the dialect differences of the black and poor have been characterised as being separate and distinct from other variations and are often labelled as a separate bilingualism. Two other kinds of language differences exist within the population's knowledge of only one language different from English and some form of bilingualism. A large number of those children who have difficulty in acquiring written language comprehension although certainly not all normally come from

the populations that use the mother tongue or switching in school. Several hypotheses have been presented to account for the difficulties that these children encounter in acquiring written language comprehension. The first is that the transfer and mapping of written categories and rules to phonological categories and rules imposes enormous constraints on these children since the written language, in structure, is so different from the structure of their spoken language.

A study by Bialystok (2001:22) provides more clues as to why dialect differences may yet interfere in learning to read, because of attitudes toward these differences. This study was concerned with teacher styles in first grade classrooms. Tests of homogeneity of regression showed that no interaction between children directly in reading and children sharing purpose and meaning in communication were important factors in learning to read and achieving higher reading scores. The above study suggests that the most important factors in learning to read are meaningful communication between teachers and learners and expectations of teachers concerning probable success. Therefore, either a dialect approach is used in the teaching of reading or indirect approaches are used where attempts are made to either change the spoken language the children use or to make friends with them.

It seems logical to suppose that using one language creates enormous difficulties in learning to read another. Comparative unfamiliarity with the language to be read as in the case of varying degrees of bilingualism also may cause difficulty in learning to read the less familiar language.

### **2.3.10 Reading and Writing are Language Processes**

Teachers must understand the relationships between reading and writing and children's oral language. Children's oral language reflects their experiences with objects, ideas, relationships and their interactions with their world. Much has been written about what children bring to school and the role of the school in building on each child's abilities. Teachers should help children transfer the language background that they bring to school directly to their reading and writing (Joyce, 2002:146).

Studies have shown that experiences that promote success in reading occur long before a child begins formal schooling (Sutherland, 2005: 25). For example, before starting school, many children can recognize letters of the alphabet, write their names, identify brand names, use books properly and retell all parts of favourite stories. Many children also exhibit knowledge of written

language and its purpose to communicate. They may scribble letters and stories and read their compositions to others, make spelling and create letter like forms. In addition children often demonstrate an understanding of stories and use stories to bring meaning to their play. These behaviours indicate understanding language that can form the foundation for effective literacy instruction. Karten (2005:52), highlights the importance of oral language facility to the reading process: Reading instruction builds especially on oral language. If this foundation is weak, progress in reading will be slow and uncertain. Children must have at least a basic vocabulary, a reasonable range of knowledge about the world around them and the ability to talk about their knowledge. These abilities form the basis for comprehending text. A primary method by which to promote all the language processes is through their integration in reading quality literacy selections.

### **2.3.11 Reading as a meaningful, active, constructive and strategic process**

Reading is comprehension and good readers are good in comprehending (Johnson, 2006:14). Reading is an active process of constructing meaning by making connections between our existing knowledge to the knowledge presented in a book or text. The product of making this connection or interacting with printed language should be comprehension. Reading involves the interaction of several factors, including textual factors, background knowledge and the social setting in which reading occurs, the effective reader time and in the right doses for understanding. The learner becomes a strategic and flexible reader. Flexible readers choose from a variety of strategies to fulfill their purpose in comprehending text.

Reading and writing are developmental processes. If teachers accept that reading and writing are the construction of meaning, there is no such thing as mastery literacy ability, rather it is a constantly involving process. The individual's experiential and conceptual backgrounds continue to grow as they read and write. As one's background knowledge grows so does one's ability to interact with text and acquire new information, therefore literacy capabilities are constantly expanding. While the stages are not entirely separate, they do provide teachers with an overall view of the development and how their learners' growth and their instruction fit into the big picture. Maree (2002: 40) views reading development as a sequence of stages. Stage 1 Grade 0 focuses on learning to recognise and identify letters, Stage 1 which is grade 1 and beginning of

Grade 2 emphasises decoding or word-pronunciation abilities and comprehension of simple stories, Stage 2 which is Grade 2 and 3 centres on making decoding abilities automatic and increasing comprehension.

### **2.3.12 Reading Readiness**

In school settings activities that can support reading readiness skills could include allowing children plenty of opportunities to handle, look at a range of books in a quiet area applying strategies like: Identifying words and linking them to the relevant pictures, using role play and drama activities to act out roles and characters from familiar stories, telling stories from picture cards and cartoons, and giving children opportunities to play with letters and words, such as putting back together cut up words. As children progress through the early stages of reading readiness, they should have experiences of observing an adult reading, undertaking shared and guided reading, matching picture cues to words, sequencing pictures to create a story; looking at and discussing patterns in words; using and looking at common words; matching words; breaking down words into letters; creating simple sentences in pairs, groups and individually; early stages of punctuation (Davin, 2005:92).

## **2.4 CHALLENGES FACED BY LEARNERS IN THE ACQUISITION OF READING AND WRITING SKILLS**

The challenges which learners face can be the learners' interest in learning. Interest and attitude are learned in much the same way that skills, habits and other kinds of school work are learned. Children, who are interested in a learning task, spontaneously focus their attention on the task, want to complete that task and to arrive at the result or solution. On the other hand, learners who are not interested in a learning task psychologically close themselves and the valuable input goes by unnoticed and wasted. Sometimes the teachers force the learners to be interested in learning and to take part in the learning and this, most of the time, is developing strong resistant notions in learners which further aggravates their problems in acquiring skills of reading and writing. One other challenge might be the nervous tension which further drains the energy of the children. Nervous tension prevents smooth and sustained concentration in learners. There are children who already had many experiences of failure and most definitely are not relaxed when they go into the

learning situation, they already have decided that they will not succeed. Physical disabilities might account for a child's problem. To give an example, there are the maturation and growth differences among children which might account for a particular child's problems. Reading readiness for example, might vary from five to eight years. Some schools just admit under age children leading to this problem of reading and writing readiness. The learning environment is one of those factors or conditions that fall outside learners and in which they have no voice. If the condition at school is the overcrowded classes that might affect the normal teaching and learning of children, then it is obvious that the learners cannot pay full attention and that important information, fact and skills will not be transferred effectively to the class. Some children are lazy, which is the result of boring, uninteresting, monotonous learning situation (McMinn, 2003: 32).

Some children have the problem of defects of vision. Those learners are identified by squinting, often frowning and rubbing their eyes, their eyes are red and swollen, they hold the reading materials close and far from their eyes and they complain of dizziness and headaches. Some children have the problem of spelling and pronunciation of words which is the result of auditory defects. Learners have motor defects realised by bad handwriting due to the stiffness of joints. Emotional disturbances are also a challenge. Learners cry easily, they have the typical behaviour of nail biting, twisting of clothes and hair and thumb sucking. Learners show unnatural fears and anxieties. Symptoms of fatigue such as back aches and tired eyes are often present. Some children are lacking energy, they have puffiness under their eyes, they have a distended abdomen, dull nails, hair and skin which are the results of malnutrition. There are some children with poor visual discrimination and who are not able to recognise differences and similarities easily, for example, the difference between a square and rectangle and a circle and an oval. There are children with poor visual memory and who are not able to give good descriptions of visual experiences and in class might see the word 'cat', but write 'tac' (McMinn, 2003: 33).

## **2.5 CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN TEACHING READING AND WRITING SKILLS**

Certain learning problems in the child might be traced back directly to the teacher. This statement does not mean to create the impression that the teacher is the sole or only factor responsible for learning problems in the child. However, teachers who are not dedicated to their task have a great demoralising influence in the child. An indolent, uninspired teacher creates an uninspired atmosphere in class. The teacher's attitude probably contributes more to poor teaching than all other barriers combined. The poor organisation of the learning content cannot lead to effective learning in children. Teachers fail to take cognisance of individual differences. They come to class not fully prepared and, as a result, often dish out homework in a haphazard way. Some teachers openly reject the learner in class. They emphasise wrong study methods and offer inadequate guidance in class. There are teachers who do not allow a little humour in class, who set unrealistic levels of performance and provide fertile soil for the growth of learning problems in a child (Butcher, 2005: 42).

Overcrowded classes reduce the chances of the teacher being able to make contact with individual learners. Children who have to learn in crowded, stuffy rooms will become fatigued far more easily than their counterparts in spacious, airy rooms. The noisy environments also affect the teacher's work. Learners who are involved in mental work are easily fatigued if learning takes place under noisy conditions with frequent interruptions. One other problem might be the school which has meagre equipment and where the most needed facilities are not available. Teaching is also affected by teachers who are not qualified to teach the subjects they are teaching children. The teachers might sometimes use the wrong methods of teaching to teach the learners. Children who are frequently absent prepare the field for learning problems to develop (Kelly, 2004: 24).

There are also learning problems which arise mainly from children's relationships with their teacher. It is true that not all children have good relationships with their teachers, but teachers should be aware that strained relationships adversely affect a child's performance. Poor relationships bring about tensions and conflicts which are detrimental to effective learning. Children who do not like a teacher or who are rejected by the teacher, psychologically close

themselves in the teaching-learning situation with the result that a lot of information and facts go by unnoticed for that child. Gaps in children's knowledge are the first steps towards learning problems.

## **2.6 MODELS OF READING**

The skills and processes that are involved in the act of reading can be given different emphasis. The following three models of reading can help learners to appreciate the process involved in reading:

### **2.6.1 The Bottom-up Model**

The bottom-up model of reading derives from research into the perception, storage and retrieval of linguistic information and refers to approaches to reading which emphasise the identification and analysis of units of language on the page. In this model, reading is described as a process that begins with the identification of letters or sounds and later involves using higher levels of linguistic knowledge such as word identification and sentence structure. Learning to read involves making progress through a series of hierarchically sequenced skills beginning with the recognition of letters on words in isolation. This model excludes the wider factors of reading such as the experience, expectations and attitudes of the reader. It does not acknowledge that it is often easier to read and remember words, particularly function words, when they are supported by context. Nor does it take account of findings which show that knowledge about sound symbol correspondences develops through reading and their familiarity with the content and type of the material they are reading. The bottom-up model can lead to a very narrow view of literacy since by focusing on the component skills it excludes the part that is played by the readers and the readers' purpose for reading (Lane, 2002: 55).

### **2.6.2 The Top-Down Model**

This model stresses the importance of the qualities and the experiences readers bring to reading. It suggests that readers begin to read by drawing on what they know about the structure and meaningfulness of language, the structure of stories and other genres and their knowledge of the world to predict the general meaning and specific words in the text. Their recreation of meaning is

confirmed or disapproved by the selective sampling of words and letters. Phonic and word matching skills which enable the reader to translate letters and words into oral equivalents develop in context and are needed to refine the reader's ability, they are not regarded as the basis of it.

### **2.6.3 The Interactive Model**

This model puts the bottom-up and top-down models alongside each other and so includes code features and the broader aspects of reading (Manzo, 2004:16). In this model, readers are seen as approaching texts with the expectation that they are meaningful. They use their familiarity with the subject-matter, their valuable experience of written material, their knowledge about reading and their expectation of meaning to make predictions about context and words. Simultaneously, readers use their knowledge about letters, sounds, words and syntax. These two elements, the reader's knowledge and the textual details work together. The information gained from word or sound shapes the reader's expectations about the meaning and the anticipation of meaning influences the reader's recognition of the words and the letters the text contains. Continued experience of written texts leads to the automatic recognition of many words and this enables the reader to pay more attention to meaning. In interactive models the reader's understanding of reading as a communicative activity and the skills of reading are both important.

## **2.7 SKILLS**

Skills involving lower-level cognitive progress are specific in nature and are more or less automatic routines. Examples of literacy skills include the various decoding methods used in phonics, structural analysis and content analysis. Specific comprehension skills include recognising sequential development fact versus opinion in a stated index and interpreting bar graph and skills such as capitalization, punctuation and spelling (Butcher, 2005: 20).

In a school setting, activities that can support reading readiness skills could include:

- Allowing children plenty of opportunities to handle, look at a range of books in a quiet area.
- Using children's own books (individual, group and class) as first readers,
- Using listening centre, tape recorders to listen to and follow a story using tapes and books.

- Using story sacks, story boxes to encourage parental/care involvement in the home,
- Sharing stories and rhymes in a fun and pleasurable way.
- Using role play and drama activities to act out roles and characters from familiar stories.
- Identifying words and linking them to the relevant pictures.
- Breaking down words into letters and the sound that each letter makes.
- Identifying that the top left hand corner is starting point and left to right orientation.
- Activities that encourage auditory and visual development, left and right orientation and having fun with letters and words.
- Sequencing pictures, events and celebrating, such as using pictures.
- Book days where children dress up as their favourite book characters.
- Book fairs and book bus.
- Playing with jigsaws and sequencing cards.
- Having a reading area and access to reading material outdoors.
- Using puppets to create individual, group and class stories.
- Playing games like lotto, odd one out, spot the difference.
- Retelling stories from picture cards and cartoons.
- Listening to visitors and reading to them.
- Opportunities to play with letters and words, such as putting back together cut up words.

As children progress through these early stages of reading readiness, they should have experience of (Walker, 2006: 40):

- observing an adult reading.
- shared and guided reading.
- matching picture cues to words.
- sequencing pictures to create a story.
- looking at and discussing patterns in words.
- shapes of letters and words.
- using and looking at common words.
- matching words.
- breaking down words into letters.

- creating simple sentences in pairs, groups and individually.
- early stages of punctuation.

### **Other basic writing skills**

Two measures of basic writing skills are:

Letter-word identification which requires children to identify symbols, letters and words. The test progresses from matching a picture, of an object with a rebus to identifying isolated letters and words. Word attack which measures the ability to pronounce printed, unfamiliar letter string by applying phonic and structural analysis skills. Children should have plenty of opportunities to make marks and write through meaningful activities. Through participation in purposeful writing tasks, children will improve their written skills and move along the learning continuum.

Although there are stages of writing that the children move through, it is important to note that even if they are at the stage of mark marking they are still able to write for a variety of purposes. The following is a breakdown of the different stages children move through to become confident and competent writers in this area of the curriculum:

- mark marking,
- unexplained scribbles,
- explained scribbles,
- attempts to write letters,
- left to right orientation,
- model writing,
- making list and notes,
- own attempts to write simple sentences,
- write simple sentences using word books and dictionaries,
- write simple sentences with capital letters, full stops, question marks,
- write short stories,
- write for a variety of purposes.

### **2.7.1 Skills learning**

Skills learning is particularly suitable to the explicitly and direct instruction approach. Summarising the literature on the teaching procedures for direct instruction has helped to delineate six instructional functions for teaching well-instructed objectives. Teachers who use these procedures consistently see higher than average achievement among their learners. At the heart of the explicit or direct instruction methods is expecting explanations, modelling and guided practice. Explicit explanation can include defining reading skills, modelling or demonstrating its use in an actual situation and thinking aloud with the learners about what skill is and how it is used.

### **2.7.2 Teach both reading and writing**

Shanahan (2004: 69) does not consider the reading and writing skills, strategies and cognitive processes to be similar which suggests that children need the opportunity to be taught both. Learners do not become writers only through reading instruction, nor do they become readers only through writing instruction. Learners need both reading and writing opportunities so that each skill can enhance the development of the other

## **2.8 LEADERSHIP STYLE OF TEACHERS**

The teaching strategy of a teacher can create the development of learning problems in children. Campbell (2001:163) cites the well-known research of Lipid and White on authoritarian, laissez-faire and democratic teaching styles and the effects these strategies had on the learners: Authoritarian teachers direct every action in class, they exercise firm control, do all the talking and planning in class and issue all directions themselves. The pupil is a passive receiver of instruction. The result of this type of teaching was found to be that children tended to be apathetic, to be very dependent and showed little capacity for initiative and occasionally showed hostility towards one another. A child in this type of classroom atmosphere may easily develop learning problems and not have the confidence to ask for help.

Laissez-faire teachers go to the opposite extreme from the authoritarian teachers. They are present in class, may answer questions, but essentially allow learners to follow their own initiative. It is the

learners who decide when they will go about doing it. The result of this type of teaching is found to be that children go along with one another, feel insecure, are uncertain of learners and repeatedly ask for help. It is clear that if children fall behind in a classroom atmosphere like this, their problems will simply increase.

Democratic teachers act as democratic group leaders. They allow interchanges of ideas and insights and operate in a give and take situation and encourage learners to think for themselves. The result of this teaching strategy is found to be that the learners are more friendly towards one another, there is an initiative working atmosphere, there is a high level of efficiency, learners are less dependent on the teacher, pupils show more initiative and personal involvement. It is obvious that the democratic teaching strategy, in comparison with the other two, will minimise the chances of learning problems developing since learners will be free to discuss their problems with the teachers.

Other reading strategies according to Manzo (2004:205) are; if I don't understand a word, I can:

- Skip the word, continue reading then go back,
- Read the sentence and paragraph again,
- Read the next sentence,
- Guess-but my guess must make sense,
- Compare my guess in spelling and phonic,
- Look at the root word, is there a suffix,
- Cover the word ending in -ing, -ed, -ies, -er, -ion,
- Does the word have meaning? Which meaning is correct? Which sign is correct?

### **2.8.1 Teacher – learner and learner – learner relationship**

There are also learning problems which arise mainly from children's relationships with their teacher or with their fellow learners. It is true that not all children have good relationships with their teachers, but teachers should be aware that strained relationships adversely affect a child's performance. Some relationships bring about tension and conflict which are detrimental to effective reading. Learners who do not like the teacher or who are rejected by their teacher, psychologically close them in the teaching – learning situation and facts go by unnoticed for that child. Gaps in learner's knowledge are the first steps towards learning problems.

Avoidance tendencies in children as a result of poor relationships prevent effective learning from taking place. The children's problems are aggravated if their fellow learners in class also reject them for some reason or other. There are also cases where the peer group might block incoming information.

## **2.9 THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Learning problems often result from the circumstances under which children are taught. The learning environment is one of those factors or conditions that fall outside learners and in which they have no voice. If conditions at school are such that they might affect the normal teaching and learning of children, then it is obvious that pupils cannot pay full attention and important acts and skills will not be transferred effectively to the class once a particular child falls behind in class, the possibility of learning problems developing is very high (Browne, 2007:133).

### **2.9.1 The following are the rotating factors in the learning environment**

- Overcrowded classes reduce the chance of the teacher being able to make contact with individual learners. Since it is known that learning is facilitated when children know that they are accepted and recognised and that their presence makes a difference, problems might develop for the individual child.
- Children who have to learn in crowded, stuffy rooms will become fatigued far more easily than their counter parts in spacious, airy rooms.
- Learners who are involved in mental work are easily conditioned with frequent interruptions.
- Learning is affected when a school has meager equipment and if the most necessary facilities are not available.
- Learning is affected by poor organisation and bad administration.
- Learning is affected by teachers who are not qualified to teach the subject they are teaching (Joyce, 2002: 63).

Children who are frequently absent from school prepare the field for learning problems to develop. However, it is not only modern facilities and the spacious rooms that make for good teaching, it is

impossible to pick a beautiful flower in the most barren desert. It is the teaching not the teacher that is of the greatest importance, and it is the environment for learning in the classroom rather than the physical characteristics of class and classroom that are most important for school learning.

### **2.9.2 Reading and writing centres**

Teachers should include reading and writing centres in their classrooms. Such centres can be for use by large groups, small groups and individual learners. Campbell (2002:180) includes the following centres as examples of how centres can function.

- **Rug-time centre:** learners and teacher can meet to discuss a story; they read together, plan a thematic unit, and sing songs, share teachers and learner authored stories. A key feature of the rug-time centre is that it can serve as a starting or jumping off place for other centre activities.
- **Computer writing centre:** children are offered a free choice to use the computer either univocally or in collaboration to write stories, make lists, write letters and write stories for any piece of art they made. The word processing use of the computer writing centre can be enhanced by encouraging children to simply experiment with language and composition. Children who have difficulty writing by hand may be more expressive experimentally with language when using the computer.
- **Computer centre:** for skills practice and reinforcement such as a centre can be based on the abundance of computer software available for the practice and reinforcement of reading and writing skills. In addition in many sites that deal with reading and writing, for example, learners can write to learners in other states and countries and communicate with public and private agencies and interact with children's authors and magazine publishers. The purpose of these computer activities is to provide opportunities for children to practise and apply their reading and writing skills to meaningful text and at a level appropriate to their individual needs.
- **Listening library centre:** This should be an inviting area furnished with pillows, carpet squares and child – sized chairs in a corner or in the back of the classroom where children go to listen to tape-recorded books. Children can read the books and listen to the accompanying tape recording. Teachers can use commercially prepared, adult prepared and older-learners prepared tapes.

- **Art and making things centre:** Here, learners can express themselves in ways that go beyond typing or writing journals. Such a centre can extend and enrich children's understanding and reasoning about concepts and ideas. Children can illustrate events in stories that have been read to them or that they have written, they can infer ideas and characters through art and they can compare and contrast their art with those illustrated in the books they read.

## **2.10 LEARNING PROBLEMS**

There is a serious difference between what the learners are able to do and what they actually achieve, i.e. a discrepancy between actual and expected performance. They achieve poorer results than can be expected of their potential. This not only applies to children with low mental abilities, but to any children of any intellectual ability who can experience writing and reading problems. The following factors or conditions might either be separately or jointly responsible for reading and writing problems in the child.

### **2.10.1 Learning problems mainly arising from the school situation**

The learner's reading problems might certainly be traced back directly to the teachers. The statement is not meant to create the impression that the teacher is the sole or only factor responsible for learning problems in the child. However, teachers who are not dedicated to the task, have a great demoralising and demotivating influence on a child. An uninspired teacher creates an uninspired atmosphere in class.

"We sometimes wonder", says Campbell (2002:154), "whether teachers are not their own worst enemies. Learning problems in learners are most likely to develop if teachers do any of the following.":

- Offer too much reading content of information which they cannot effectively make their own. Poor organisation and systematisation of the learning content cannot lead to effective learning in learners.
- Fail to take cognizance of individual differences.
- Do not come fully to class and as a result often dish out homework in haphazard way.
- Openly reject a learner in class.

- Emphasizing wrong methods and offer inadequate guidance in class.
- Take to sarcasm, have an overcritical attitude, do not allow for little humour in class, set unrealistic level of performance, and provide fertile soil for the growth of learning problems in a learner.

## **2.10.2 Learning problems stemming from the family situation**

### **Family Situation**

The family situation is another factor which can affect the learning of children to such an extent that it is not possible for them to meet expectations at schools. A great deal of learning, often incidental learning, takes place in the family. The attitudes and the values children hold when they enter school for the first time have been acquired in the family situation. Some children come to school eager to learn, others are much less eager or even resistant. Some children find the transition from home to school fairly easy because they realise, for example, that the school has the same basic values, ideas and ideals that are present in their homes. Others find the transition very difficult, often traumatic. They might recognise a serious difference between what is lived and advocated at home and what is taking place at school (Browne, 2007:3). These children have such a struggle with conflict and contradictions in general that their school work suffers.

The following specific factors in the family situation affect children's learning adversely.

- Some parents are inconsistent in the upbringing of their children with the result that the children are unfamiliar with the definite, clearly outlined ways of doing things which mark the school situation.
- In certain homes there is general uncertainty regarding how to raise the children or what to expect of them.
- Some parents have relatively low aspirations for their children with the result that the children are neither used, nor interested in exerting themselves at school.
- Often children have poor self conception which originates from poor family relations.

- Some parents have negative attitudes to the school which might lead not only to irregular school attendance by the children but also to negative or even resistant attitudes on the part of the children.
- Some parents generally lack supervision, limited time is spent with the children, and limited opportunities exist for communication between parents and children.
- Children might come from over – protective homes where they lack opportunities to be independent.
- Some children come from broken homes, while others are openly rejected by their parents.’
- Some do find love and security at home, but are forced by circumstances to work after school and weekends to add to the family income with the result that there is limited time for school work.
- Others are so worried about the family welfare, illness, financial problems, family quarrels and infighting that they find it hard to concentrate on their school work.
- Some children suffer from malnutrition and become very easily tired at school, others overtax their digestion systems to such an extent that unnecessary energy is drained which could be spent profitably in the learning situation (Browne, 2007:5).

### **2.10.3 Learning problems stemming from the child’s personality structure**

#### **2.10.3.1 Giftedness**

In the same way that the rules for learning might be directly responsible for learning problems, giftedness might also be the cause of a child’s problems in class (Sutherland, 2005:49).

It has been mentioned already that in school:

- school work is not geared to meet the needs of gifted children, but those of the average child,
- gifted children seldom work up to their full potential,
- school work is seldom a challenge to the gifted. The lazy learners or uninterested learners in school work tend to avoid the monotony of the learning situation or try to complete just the bare minimum in order to stay out of trouble. Gifted children often are not popular among their peers since they are different from the group. They neglect

their work on purpose. Even gifted children need the assistance and guidance of a teacher and even these children will develop problems if there are gaps in their knowledge. The mere fact that these children are not working up to their full potential constitutes a learning problem (Sutherland, 2005:49).

### **2.10.3.2 School readiness**

Children must be ready for learning tasks in order to benefit most from formal school education. Young people are ready to learn something when they have achieved the physio-epical maturation and experimental background which not only makes them able to do the learning task, but also to want to do it. Children who are ready have acquired task readiness, there is a willingness to stay with a task until it is completed. If children are not ready, involved in work for which they are not ready, this might lead to lack of interest, lack of concentration, antipathy, hostility and even total rejection. Under such emotional strain, it is not likely that effective learning will take place (Sutherland, 2005:50).

### **2.10.3.3 Personal tempo**

Learners in the class differ from one another in that there are a variety of traits and abilities among them. Children have their own personal tempo at which they live and work. Their own speed and way in which they tackle and complete tasks:

- Some children are quick to grasp and to assimilate new knowledge; others are slower and need more explanatory information.
- Some children can complete a task quickly and accurately; others can complete the same tasks accurately, but need much more time to do so.

A slower tempo of learning does not necessarily imply a lower Intellectual Quotient, although it must be remembered that speed is one of the attributes of intelligent behaviour. However, there are children who are quite intelligent, but are temperamentally slower in their reaction time and therefore slower to complete tasks. From a teaching-learning point of view, it is important to remember that if the tempo at which a classroom group progresses is fast in particular children, they might easily fall behind. On the other hand if it is slow for other children, these children

might easily get frustrated and lose interest. The consequences in both cases are obviously to the detriment of such children (Sutherland, 2005:51).

#### **2.10.3.4 Interest**

Interest is learned in much the same way that skills, habits and other kinds of school work are learned. Children, who are interested in a learning task, spontaneously focus their attention on that task they want to complete that and to arrive at the result. Children who are forced to be interested and to take part in the learning act might develop strong resistant notions which further aggravate their problems. An uninterested child who is forced to take part in learning activities, but who tries to avoid them, easily falls pray to learning problems.

#### **2.10.3.5 Nervous Tension**

Continual failures in class, resulting from teachers and learners own image of themselves as failures, easily result in a state of nervous tension which further drains the energy of the children. People who continually are subjected to stained nerves are easily fatigued. Nervous tension prevents smooth and sustained concentration. Children who definitely are not relaxed when they go into the learning situation, have already decided that they will not succeed. Nervous tension is poison to the child's body as well as to effective learning and clearly might lead to learning problems (McMinn, 2003:17).

#### **2.10.3.6 Wrong attitudes**

Attitudes and interests are closely related. The kind of attitudes which children have affects their school work and learning in many ways. A child with a positive attitude towards school and teachers is most likely to progress satisfactorily. Negative attitudes in the child are barriers to effective learning. Unpleasant experiences in the classroom, a poor relationship with teachers and other learners, a low opinion of the school on the part of both children and their parents might all lead to a negative inclination to learning and cause low achievement. Wrong attitudes cause blockage to effective learning. A negative attitude to learning implies that children do not want to be involved or to participate in the learning act. This in turn leads to frustrations and a feeling of defeat. Wrong attitudes to learning clearly lead to learning problems in children (McMinn, 2003: 18).

### **2.10.3.7 Physical Disabilities**

Learning problems might be caused by a variety of physical disabilities which either single or jointly account for a child's problem.

- Brain injuries during birth especially when certain specific areas are damaged might lead to specific learning disability such as problems of perseverance.
- Maturation and growth differences among children might account for a particular child's problem. Reading readiness for example might vary from five to eight years.
- Organic defects, a child's eyes or ears might be factors that seriously affect learning.
- Bad teeth, bad tonsils, smoking, the use of drugs are all poisonous to the body and hamper the normal functioning of the brain.
- Clear eye-hand-foot domination by a particular brain lobe. If there is no dominance, both lobes might try to control vision with the result of causing serious reading problems.
- Motor defects can cause problems. Children need to perceive properly to read properly and need proper muscular control in order to write properly.
- Children who suffer from an illness will be fatigued quickly by both physical and mental work (McMinn, 2003: 18).

### **2.10.4 Learning problems stemming from educational difficulties**

#### **Laziness**

The reason for a specific child's laziness can be manifold. Generally speaking, however, laziness is the result of boring, uninterested, and monotonous living situations. Children might feel that there is nothing stimulating in the learning situation and that it is not worthwhile to get involved or to exert them in the learning activity. Lazy children stay away from or avoid a learning activity, do not want to be actively involved, are not willing to exert themselves when they do take part, through these acts do not get sufficient exercise in and experience of necessary skills. The results of this are that gaps in the children's knowledge might occur and they might fall behind the others in class. This could give rise to the learning problems (Griffin, 1998: 18).

## **Stubbornness and Aggressiveness**

According to McMinn (2003:31), research has repeatedly shown that those learners who engage in norm violating behaviour are usually children who have failed in school or who persistently get low marks.

Their failures lead to low self-concepts and the temptation to get even. Children who are temperamentally stubborn are difficult to reach. Teachers find it difficult to get such children to follow their instructions and methods spontaneously. If stubbornness and aggression have resulted from a record of failures, then such children are heading for more serious learning problems. Children frustrated by the teacher and the learning difficulties with which they are confronted cannot withdraw from the learning situation nor can they tear up their books, break their pencils, strike at another child, and slam the door. On arriving at home, they might kick the dog, not because the dog has done anything wrong, but because they must show their superiority in a fashion similar to the teacher's power over them. Their aggression serves as a means of relieving tension.

## **Egocentricity and the impulse of self-assertion**

All people have a basic need to be recognised as individuals, to establish and assert themselves and to maintain a certain position in life. Children who feel insecure will often strive to establish themselves as the centre of attention. They must show off, ask numerous questions, talk loud, try to be witty and play all kinds of mischievous pranks. Such attempts to reinforce their ego might just aggravate their problems in class.

- By showing off and deliberately trying to be centre of attention. They waste valuable energy; their attention is not on the learning tasks but is occupied by trivialities.
- By taking to this way of behaviour, they lose more friends than they win, often their relations with both peers and teachers are strained (Wiechers, 1969: 175).

## **Reading and spelling problems**

Reading and spelling problems can seriously affect the child's progress at school. Griffin (1998: 34) states that certain subjects, such as Languages, the Art and Literature depend mostly on reading with the result that there are high correlations between reading comprehension and the

subjects. This correlation in Mathematics and Science courses is somewhat lower, but is still significant. It is also important to note that these correlations are generally higher in the primary school particularly Foundation Phase. Clearly, reading and spelling problems will seriously affect a child's progress in primary school where most of the learning activities depend heavily on reading and writing. Problems that develop at this level might be the result of:

- Wrong eye movement in reading; for example the eyes keep jumping back along a line instead of going forward.
- Irregular types of eye movement as a result of emotional strain or nervous tension.
- Inadequate experiences in eye – hand co-ordination, inadequate experience in visual and auditory discrimination, left or right domination, left or right domination not clearly established and general didactical neglect.

When an analysis of typical reading and spelling mistakes is made, one often finds that children:

- Make phonetic mistakes: “telfone” instead of ‘telephone’, ‘aloud’ for ‘allowed’.
- Confuse vowels and consonants, they write ‘came’ for ‘game’ ‘same’ for ‘shame’.
- Make insertion mistakes when reading or spelling: ‘as good as work’ instead of ‘as good work’, elision mistakes: ‘welcom’ for ‘welcome’, ‘because so’ for ‘because she also’.
- Make meaningless spelling mistakes: ‘wallos’ ‘instead’ ‘shallow’. Read ‘up come for’ instead of ‘come up for’.

#### **2.10.5 The following symptoms are indications to the teacher either of learning problems or of special learning disabilities**

- poor visual discrimination: a child with poor visual discrimination is not able to recognise differences and similarities;
- Poor visual memory: visual memory is the ability to remember what the eyes have seen. A child with poor visual memory is not good at giving descriptions of visual experience and in class might see the word ‘cat’, but write ‘tac’ (Manzo, 2004, 151-153).

### **2.10.6 Dedicational matters**

It is clear from what has been discussed so far that certain problems in learners might arise from debated matters. Even if class teachers are dedicated, learning problems might still occur in some particular children. This could be the result of:

- The amount of work which is just too much for those particular learners.
- Certain syllabuses which are too long and too loaded with details, resulting in a teacher's inability to work through the syllabus within the prescribed time.
- The time factor which causes certain children to fall behind in class and where teachers simply cannot find the time to help them catch up again.
- Too many extra – curriculum activities in which children take part, not only because it is their desire to do so, but also because there seems to be pressure from the school itself.
- A repetition of methods which have proved to be most successful with one child or group but which might not be successful with another or which might even be detrimental to that child or group.

### **2.11 CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN FACILITATING READING AND WRITING IN FOUNDATION PHASE (GRADE R – 3)**

After the implementation of Curriculum 2005, teachers raised a lot of issues regarding the curriculum in general. As a result, the curriculum developers tried to reduce the paperwork as well as critical outcomes and learning outcomes and thereby using the National Curriculum Statement, but there are still some critical issues which need to be considered (Kay, 1999: 25).

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) documents, uses complex language and confusing terminology such as meaningless jargon and vague language; the unnecessary use of unfamiliar terms to replace familiar ones; and the lack of a common understanding and use of National Curriculum Statement (NCS) terminology. There is also the inadequate training of teachers. People who conduct workshops, just read what is written inside a guide and ask the teachers to go home to read and implement at school without a clear understanding of what they wanted them to deliver in

the classroom. Therefore the teachers fail to practice quality teaching of reading and writing (Kay, 1999: 27).

According to Hunkins (2004), teachers are not able to put into practice what they were taught and learnt at different colleges and universities. Some of the reasons put forward are that the curriculum in its original form did not give teachers a clear sense of the knowledge and skills they needed to cover in each grade. The implementation was rushed and this led to inadequate improvement in the teacher's level of understanding. Evaluation is also poor. Education specialists are not evaluating teachers to see if they are on the right track and assist where possible. Education specialists are lazy to do their work and teachers also become lazy. Hence learner's competence in reading and writing is compromised. Despite this theoretical training, teachers are often confused when faced with such radical changes in the curriculum and, as a result, they struggle to apply the new ideas in the classroom.

Fraser (2004:87) points out other challenges faced by teachers. For instance, teachers complained about the availability of teaching and learning resources. The problem with learning support materials to take the curriculum forward ranged from their availability, quality and use to the training in their use which teachers were given. The quality variable is the result of the design flowing in curriculum and the unreliability of the evaluation process. The Department of Education gives the schools the same amount of money to go and buy the books of their own choice, but the schools are normally choosing the wrong books. Some schools are using the money in the wrong things which are not allocated for. They might use the money for sport transport purposes instead of buying books. The absence of basic resources such as pencils, exercise books and duplicating machines in many schools increases the problems. In the majority of contexts, teachers did not have time, resources and skills to develop or to improve their own materials.

## **2.12 THE TEACHER'S TASK TOWARDS PUPILS WITH LEARNING PROBLEMS**

**Preventive:** By taking preventive measures, the teacher can often timeously dominate learning problems, disappointment and failures that might arise in later years. If effective teaching takes place, these measures alone will often prevent the onset of many problems.

**Identification:** The necessity for early identification of learning problems cannot be emphasised strongly enough. The well-known saying that prevention is better than cure holds very true in this case. The earlier the problems can be identified, the earlier they can be attended to. Children with learning problems easily adopt wrong learning methods and in turn this lands them in a vicious cycle of failure from which it is very difficult to escape of their own accord (Fitzgerald, 2005: 52).

**Remediation:** Remedial or corrective actions can only be taken once the learning problems have been identified. The teacher then can help the learners by means of remedial work in order to enable them to acquire the necessary skills. If the problem is more serious, the children might be given a complete remedial or corrective programme in addition to their normal classwork. Children with even more serious problems might have to be referred to the school psychological services or to the child guidance clinic.

### **Other roles that can be played by the teacher**

A large part of guided reading is talking about reading and the teacher's role is to maintain the class conversation. Occasionally some modelling of the use of reading strategies is necessary, but most of the time the teacher's role is to involve learner's responses based on their own thoughts and opinions about the reading processes. A passive learner will not benefit from an instructor's modelling as much as he or she will from active participation. In time, students learn to independently ask themselves these same questions and as they eventually internalise strategies, self-monitoring becomes automatic (Campbell, 2002:163).

## **2.13 LEARNER'S ROLE**

The expectation for retelling helps the learners understand that they are accountable for reading word calling (Mill, 2005:263). Each day learners are encouraged to demonstrate for the group their use of strategies for the unfamiliar text they have underlined in the morning letter. The learners discuss the rationale and appropriateness of choosing particular strategies. On some occasions, they ask appropriate guiding questions of each other. Finally, learners are required to summarise the main message in the text without memorising each word. The success of this kind of lesson is dependent on maintaining a risk-free environment for learners. The main objective is for the learners to become aware of what they need to be thinking while they read.

## **2.14 SUMMARY**

The ability to deal effectively with learners' diversity is crucial to teaching reading and writing. Teachers must address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners as well as learners with special needs in the regular classroom. The ability of teachers to handle differences effectively translates into instructional practices that lead all learners to feel secure in the classroom. Creating opportunities for success for learners with limited proficiency in English requires an understanding of nonstandard dialects, characteristics of foreign languages spoken by the learners in the classroom and learner's cultural values although speaking a nonstandard dialect or a first language other than English, can present problems in learning to read and write, a sensitive and effective teacher minimises these problems.

Teachers can adapt reading and writing instruction to the needs of speakers whose English proficiency is limited. The language experience approach, an integrated approach, oral reading approach, basal reading approach and dual – language reading approach can be useful in addressing the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Learners who have special needs are increasingly taught in the least restrictive environment which often means the regular classroom. Mainstreaming and inclusion provide the most appropriate education for each learner. In order to become readers learners need to develop confidence in their ability and acquire positive attitudes towards reading and writing. They need regular, sustained and meaningful encounters

with books and other forms of text. They need to appreciate that reading and writing is about understanding what an author is trying to communicate. Introducing learners to the key skills of reading and writing through enjoyable and purposeful activities that are related to books will help them to learn to read and write and discover the pleasure that is associated with becoming literate.

The chapter that follows explores the rationale behind the methodology employed, how the research methods were employed as well as how the research was conducted.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in the study. It explains the rationale behind the methodology employed, how the research was conducted and what steps were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. The aim of the study as stated in chapter 1, was the guiding force in this investigation. It aimed at exploring the challenges faced by teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase. To achieve the purpose of this study, a literature review was done and quantitative method of research was used. This chapter also briefly addresses the theory behind the use of the quantitative data and the process of data analysis.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The present study uses a quantitative approach. Two instruments are used: the first, a survey questionnaire, combining quantitative and qualitative questions in the form of structured forced choice questions, dichotomous items and open ended questions, and the second is a test of reading and writing skills.

#### **3.3 BACKGROUND OF THE QUANTITATIVE METHOD**

Quantitative methods are much more objective than qualitative methods. They are essentially systematic and based on a positivism perspective. Essentially quantitative data is replicable, it should be possible for the same data to be collected by another researcher in another place but for it to still measure or identify the same thing, i.e. results can be directly comparable (Legotlo, 1996: 29).

De Vos (2002:118) states that the positivist philosophy "assumes that there are social facts with an objective reality apart from the belief of the individual". He views quantitative methods as

attempting to explain social changes through the use of objective measures and statistical analysis. Quantitative researchers put their emphasis on procedures, methodologies and statistics. Quantitative data are data which can be classified in a strictly objective way. They are capable of being accurately described by a set of rules or formulae or strict procedures which then make their definition unambiguous and independent of individual judgements (Herman, 1987:29).

It is against this background that a quantitative method was chosen for this type of study.

### **3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

The research was conducted in Montshioa Stadt Cluster comprising 60 schools, which are mostly rural. Out of those schools, ten (10) primary schools were randomly selected. From each of these schools a sample of five (5) teachers was conveniently selected making a total of 50 teachers.

### **3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

#### **3.5.1 Questionnaire Development**

An open-ended questionnaire and a closed-ended questionnaire were designed and administered. The aim of the questionnaire was to gather information on the challenges faced by teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase.

The questionnaire was constructed by the researcher with the aim of finding out the views of Foundation Phase teachers regarding the challenges faced by Foundation Phase teachers in facilitating learner acquisition of reading and writing skills. Assurance of confidentiality of the information was provided to the respondents, thereby ensuring that sincere and truthful responses would be obtained. The names and addresses of the respondents were not requested in the questionnaire. While preparing the questionnaire, the researcher took into consideration the following aspects:

- Long complex sentences were avoided so that questions would be readily explicit and crystal clear to respondents;

- Leading type questions were avoided to maintain a high validity of the instrument;

The wording of the questionnaire was clearly presented with attention focused on directness and simplicity.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION**

Tools employed in the collection of data in the survey were the questionnaire and the learners' test. The questionnaire was designed and administered directly by the researcher at the sampled schools. The questionnaire and the test were guided by the aim of the study which was to gather the views of Foundation Phase teachers regarding the challenges they experience in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and also to determine what challenges learners face in the acquisition of reading and writing skills.

#### **3.6.1 Final questionnaire administration**

The final questionnaire was administered to 50 primary school teachers after it was pretested using five teachers from one of the target primary schools. The researcher delivered the questionnaire personally to the selected schools. The questionnaire was introduced to the respondents through a covering letter. Permission to conduct the research was granted by the Principals and Heads of Departments of the schools. For record purposes, the covering letter confirmed the request to conduct the research, with an explanation of the purpose of the study and the reassurance to the respondents that all the information provided would remain confidential. The questionnaire was collected by the researcher from the chosen schools.

Permission was obtained from the principals of the respective schools prior to administering the questionnaire. Senior teachers and guidance counsellors were asked to help in organising the teachers for the study. The respondents were asked not to write their names on the questionnaire. They were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire.

#### **3.6.2 Administration of the learners' test**

The test was compiled by the researcher and administered to learners in five of the 10 schools. The aim of the test was to determine if the responses of teachers on the challenges of learners'

acquisition of reading and writing skills were consistent with the actual performance of learners, in a test of reading and writing skills.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The analysis of the quantitative part of the questionnaire consisted of the computation of frequency distributions and percentages which were compared. The learners test was also analysed by using percentages.

### **3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Validity refers to the extent to which a specific measurement provides data that relates to the commonly accepted meanings of a particular concept. For example, Mouton (2002:119), points out that a test of mathematical ability cannot be limited to addition alone but would also need to cover subtraction, multiplication and division. Reliability refers to the likelihood that a given measurement procedure will yield the same description of a given phenomenon if that measurement is repeated. For example, estimating a person's age by asking his or her friends' would be less reliable than asking the person and checking the birth certificate (Mouton, 2002: 122).

To enhance reliability, the questionnaire was administered to teachers of similar educational background with a lot of experience in teaching Foundation Phase learners. Piloting and refining of the questionnaire ensured that unnecessary items were removed and that the instrument was clear and contained relevant items. The instrument was administered during the same time period to all respondents.

The learners' tests (Grade R-3) were constructed by the researcher, based on skill areas in reading and writing which learners at these different grade levels would normally be able to understand. The level of difficulty of the items was appropriate to the grade level of learners in the different grade levels, and all the items were related to the skills of reading and writing which Grade R-3 learners were familiar with. Thus the test for Grade R contained items which tested reading and writing skills appropriate for Grade R learners and so forth. In that way content validity was ensured.

### **3.9 ACCESS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The following institutions and individuals were acknowledged for giving the researcher access to their premises to gather knowledge and the relevant information for this study. They were also assured of confidentiality and anonymity in the writing of this research:

- All teachers – primary schools used in this study.
- School heads of the sampled schools.
- North West University Library.
- The Montshioa Stadt Cluster Officials.

### **3.10 SUMMARY**

This study was undertaken by the researcher to investigate the challenges faced by teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase. The main instrument that was used by the researcher was the questionnaire for collecting data from the primary school teachers mainly because of the advantage it provides to measure the degree of likes and dislikes, attitudes, beliefs and so on. A questionnaire has the advantage of providing the economy of time and a high proportion of responses especially when administered directly without mailing the questionnaire. Furthermore, the respondents have the opportunity to clarify doubts and get some of the questions interpreted from the researcher when administered personally.

The chapter that follows focuses on data analysis and the interpretation of data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the researcher reports on the empirical investigation conducted to study the challenges faced by teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase. The data is summarised qualitatively and quantitatively.

#### **4.2 REVIEW OF RESPONDENTS**

The researcher issued fifty (50) copies of the questionnaire in ten (10) primary schools and received forty-five (45) duly completed copies back, which is a 90% response rate. The learners' test was administered in one school using 30 learners per chosen grade.

#### **4.3 BIOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF RESPONDENTS**

This data was requested to gain a picture of the biographic background of the respondents. This information helps in understanding the age, gender, experience in teaching and professional qualifications of the respondents. A brief summary of the information provided in Tables is discussed.

## BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF TEACHERS

### 4.3.1 Age

**Table 4.1: Age distribution of respondents**

Age category (yrs)	Frequency	Percent
Below 30	2	4.4
31 – 35	8	17.8
36 – 40	11	24.4
41 – 45	9	20
46 and above	15	33.3
Total	45	100

Table 4.1 indicates that (33.3%) about a third of the respondents are at the ages of forty-six (46) and above. This shows that respondents are well matured and experienced. They have been in the education system for a long period and have experience of teaching learners reading and writing skills. This implies that they are in the position of teaching learners by following the relevant strategies and methods.

### 4.3.2 Gender

**Table 4.2: Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	5	11.1
Female	40	88.9
Total	45	

Table 4.2 clearly indicates that out of forty-five (45) respondents, forty (40) (88.8%) are females and five (11.1%) are males. This shows that there are more female teachers in the Foundation Phase than males. This can suggest that probably females are good in teaching the Foundation Phase learners.

### 4.3.3 Experience in Teaching Foundation Phase

**Table 4.3: Experience in Teaching Foundation Phase**

Experience (yrs)	Frequency	Percent
0 – 5	6	13.3
6 – 10	4	8.9
11 – 15	14	31.1
16 – 20	5	11.1
21 and above	16	35.6
Total	45	100

In Table 4.3 respondents were asked to indicate their teaching experience. The majority of respondents (53.3%) have between 0 to 15 years experience which indicates that just over half of the teachers sampled have sufficient experience. The implication is that they have been introduced and exposed to the concept of the acquisition of reading and writing skills during the early years of their teaching.

Only five (11.1%) of the respondents have experience of 16 to 20 years; and 16 (35.6%) of the respondents have 21 years of experience and above. This implies that they are in a position of teaching learners reading and writing skills by following the relevant strategies, models and methods. This finding is important in the orientation, guidance of reading and writing activities and empowerment for new teachers by employing the services of experienced teachers. With the view of maintaining and increasing the standard of excellence in schools, the service of experienced teachers is very essential.

### 4.3.4 Professional Qualification

**Table 4.4: Professional Qualification**

Qualification	Frequency	Percent
Certificate	3	6.7
2- year Diploma	6	13.3
3-year Diploma	8	17.8
Degree	14	31.1
Honours	11	24.4
Others	3	6.7
Total	45	100

Table 4.4 indicates that all respondents are professionally qualified. Only 3 (6.7%) have Primary Teachers Certificates. About 6 (13.3%) of the respondents have a Two-Year Diploma. This may indicate that they are relatively new in the teaching field. About 8 (17.8%) of the respondents have University Diploma in Education. About 14 (31.1%) teachers have a Degree. This is an indication that teachers are improving their qualifications. About 11 (24.4%) received their Honours in their teaching field. A number of 3 (6.7%) respondents, received their highest qualification over honours, for example, Masters. The high qualifications of respondents suggests that all respondents have capabilities of maintaining or to change the status quo which is to develop teacher skills of reading and writing by using the acquired strategies from their studies.

#### 4.4 DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT THAT THE LEARNERS SHOULD POSSESS THE FOLLOWING SKILLS?

**Table 4.5**

**Do you think it's important that the learners should possess the following skills?**

	<b>Item</b>	<b>Very important (%)</b>	<b>Important (%)</b>	<b>Not important (%)</b>
1	Letter-word identification requires learners to identify symbols, letters and words.	75.6	24.4	0
2	The task progresses from matching the picture of an object with a rebus to identifying isolated letters and words.	71.1	26.7	2.2
3	The task progresses in difficulty to words that are less frequently used in the English language and are irregular in spelling.	48.9	44.4	6.7
4	Word attack measures the ability to pronounce printed, unfamiliar letter strings by applying phonic and structural analysis skills.	62.2	35.6	2.2
5	To read pseudo words that are linguistically logical.	24.4	55.6	20

##### **Item 1: Letter-word identification requires learners to identify symbols, letters and words**

Table 4.5 shows that 75.6% of teachers and 24.4% of teachers agreed and strongly agreed that learners really need to identify symbols, letters and words for themselves. This will give the effectiveness of extensive reading in fostering learners' language development.

##### **Item 2: The task progresses from matching a picture of an object with a rebus to identify isolated letters and words**

Table 4.5 indicates that 71.1% of the teachers believe that it is very important and 26.7% believe that it is important for matching the picture of an object with a rebus to identify isolated letters and

words and 2.2% disagree that it is important. This will enable children to enjoy experimenting with written communication and to make progress in their ability to do work for themselves.

**Item 3: The task progresses in difficulty to words that are less frequently used in English language and are irregular in spelling**

Table 4.5 shows that 48.9% of the teachers believe that it is very important and 44.4% believe that it is important that the test progresses in difficulty to words used in English language which are irregular in spelling and 6.7% believe that it is not important. This suggests that the new curriculum system approaches to the teaching of vocabulary in which the number of new words are taught in each class are carefully controlled. This is much less effective in promoting vocabulary growth than simply getting learners to spend time on silent reading of interesting books.

**Item 4: Word attack measures the ability to pronounce printed, unfamiliar letter strings by applying phonic and structural analysis skills**

Table 4.5 shows that 62.2% of the teachers agree that it is very important and 35.6% of teachers agree that it is important for learners to possess the skills of attacking word measures for the ability to pronounce printed, unfamiliar letter strings by applying phonic and structural analysis skills and 2.2% believe that it is not important. Applying phonic and structural analysis skills will increase learners' exposure to the language. The quality of exposure to language that learners receive is seen as important to their potential to acquire new forms from the input.

**Item 5: To read pseudo words that are linguistically logical**

Table 4.5 shows that 24.4% of the teachers agreed that it is very important and 55.6% of the teachers agreed that it is important for learners to possess the skills of reading pseudo words that are linguistically logical and 20% disagreed that it is not important. Reading pseudo words that are linguistically logical can increase knowledge of vocabulary it can provide comprehensive input for learners.

## 4.5 PROGRESS THROUGH THE EARLY STAGES OF READING AND WRITING

**Table 4.6 Progress through the early stages of reading and writing**

	<b>Item</b>	<b>Yes (%)</b>	<b>No (%)</b>
	Do your learners have the experience of:		
<b>1</b>	Observing an adult reading?	66.7	33.3
<b>2</b>	Shared / guided reading?	73.3	26.7
<b>3</b>	Matching picture cues to words?	97.8	2.2
<b>4</b>	Sequencing pictures to create a story?	91.1	8.9
<b>5</b>	Looking at and discussing patterns in words?	71.1	28.9
<b>6</b>	Understanding shapes of letters and words?	82.2	17.8
<b>7</b>	Using and looking at common words?	84.4	15.6
<b>8</b>	Breaking down words into letters?	68.9	31.1
<b>9</b>	Creating simple sentences in groups and individually?	77.8	22.2
<b>10</b>	Possessing early stages of punctuation?	60	40

### **Item 1: Observing an adult reading?**

Table 4.6 shows that 66.7% agree that learners have the experience of observing an adult reading. This implies that Montshioa Stadt learners are well developed in observing adult reading.

### **Item 2: Shared/guided reading**

Table 4.6 shows that 73.3% of teachers agree that learners have the experience of guided reading. This is important because this shows that there are less problems of writing in learners.

### **Item 3: Matching picture cues to words**

Table 4.6 indicates that 97.8% of teachers agree and 2.2% disagree with the statement. This suggests that most teachers see how learners progress because of matching picture cues to words.

#### **Item 4: Sequencing pictures to create a story**

Table 4.6 shows that 91.1% of teachers agree that their learners have experience of sequencing pictures to create a story and 8.9% disagree. This implies that the majority have experience in sequencing pictures to create a story to make reading and writing easy for learners to grasp.

#### **Item 5: Looking at and discussing patterns in words**

Table 4.6 shows that 71.1% of respondents agree and 28.9 disagree that learners have the experience of looking at and discussing patterns in words. This suggests that the minority of respondents need to be assisted by other colleagues through semi-workshops on the need for developing learners in that experience.

#### **Item 6: Shapes of letters and words**

Table 4.6 shows that 82.2% of respondents agree that learners have experience of shapes of letters and words; and 17.8% disagree. This shows that majority of teachers do not have problem in teaching learners reading and writing skills.

#### **Item 7: Using and looking at common words?**

Table 4.6 shows that 84.4% of respondents agree and 15.6% disagree. This implies that learners are able to use and look at common words. The teachers are just expected to accommodate the remaining learners by using the extra classes and interventions.

#### **Item 8: Breaking down words into letters.**

Table 4.6 shows that 68.9% of the respondents agree and 31.1% disagree. This implies that the majority of teachers are not having problems with learners breaking down words into letters. It is only a minority of learners that need intervention.

#### **Item 9: Creating simple sentences in groups and individually**

Table 4.6 shows that 77.8% of respondents agree and 22.2% disagree. This implies that majority of teachers are doing well in this experience and the minority need some motivation and strategies to teach those learners to do well.

### **Item 10: Early stages of punctuation**

Table 4.6 shows that 60% of respondents agree and 40% disagree. This suggests that only a minority of the learners who took the test have a problem of using punctuation. This can be developed in the long run because this is only an early stage of using punctuation.

## **4.6 FOUNDATION PHASE TEST WRITTEN BY LEARNERS TO CHECK THEIR SKILLS OF READING AND WRITING IN DIFFERENT GRADES**

**Table 4.7 Foundation Phase test written by learners to check their skills of reading and writing in different grades.**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Passed</b>	<b>Failed</b>
Grade R	59%	41%
Grade 1	94%	6%
Grade 2	73.3%	26.7%
Grade 3	63.3%	36.7%

### **Grade R:**

Table 4.7 shows that 59% of Grade R learners passed the test and 41% of Grade R failed the test, in Table 4.6 77.8% of the respondents (teachers) reflecting on the learners' acquisition of reading and writing skills agree that learners have acquired the skills of reading and writing and 22.2% disagree.

In Table 4.5 shows that 93.3% of the respondents agree that learners should possess the skills of dealing with difficulties to words that are less frequently used in the English language and are irregular in spelling and 6.7% disagree. These findings show that the majority of Grade R learners in Montshioa Stadt Cluster have acquired skills of reading and writing, teachers need the regular class visits by their heads of departments on specific learning areas in order to identify the areas where they encountered problems in the different learning areas and support them with the programme of in-service coaching.

### **Grade 1:**

Table 4.7 shows that 94% of Grade1 learners passed the test and 6% failed the test. The majority of respondents (77.8%) reflecting on the learners' acquisition of reading and writing skills agree that learners have acquired the skills of reading and writing and 22.2% disagree. The majority of respondents (100%) from the open-ended questionnaire agree that learners have problems in acquiring the skills of reading and writing. The percentage of learners in terms of the test performance shows that learners are doing well in reading and writing skills. The percentage of teachers in terms of facilitating reading and writing shows that learners are not having the skills of reading and writing. This implies that the test might be below the learner's standard, for example when learners were given the question like given words to complete the sentences. Another implication maybe those teachers really need more training in terms of reading and writing skills.

### **Grade 2:**

Table 4.7 shows that 73.3 of Grade 2 learners passed the test and 26.7% failed the test. Of the respondents 77.8% agree that learners have acquired the skills of reading and writing while 22.2% disagree. All of the respondents (100%) of teachers in terms of facilitating reading and writing skills in Grade2 agree that learners have problems in acquiring the skills of reading and writing. The percentage of learners in terms of the written-test shows that learners have acquired the skills of reading and writing. The percentage of teachers in terms of facilitation of reading and writing implies that teachers lack the facilitation of skills of reading and writing. The problem might be the change of curriculum system because this was not realized during the previous curriculum system.

### **Grade 3:**

Table 4.7 shows that 63.3% of Grade3 learners passed the test and 36.7% failed the test and 77.8% of the respondents of teachers reflecting on the learners' acquisition of reading and writing skills agree that learners have acquired the skills of reading and writing and 22.2% disagree. All of the respondents (100%) of teachers who gave the responses from the open-ended questions in terms of facilitating reading and writing skills in Grade 3 agree that learners have problems in acquiring the skills of reading and writing. The percentage of learners passing the written test shows that the majority of learners passed the test in implying that there is no problem of acquiring the skills of reading and writing by learners, whereas the percentage of teachers in terms of facilitating the

skills of reading and writing shows that teachers need further training of facilitating reading and writing skills.

## **4.7 PRESENTATION OF QUALITATIVE DATA**

This section presents qualitative information based on sections C and D of the questionnaire.

### **4.7.1 Teachers' comments on challenges faced by Foundation Phase learners**

Teachers were asked to comment on the challenges faced by Foundation Phase learners in the acquisition of reading and writing. Following is a summary of the points they raised. Details will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Most of the learners lack a solid foundation in pre-school education. They tend to memorise the text when reading and cannot remember how many different or similar words they have seen and heard. They are unable to hear sound differences, and they lack eye-hand co-ordination. They reverse letters and are unable to copy accurately and complete the task within the given time frame.

Some learners suffer from physical impairment. A learner who is short-sighted or blind encounters problems in reading. Learners who have not attended pre-school tend to have inadequate gross motor and fine motor skills, making it difficult for them to move easily with letters, shapes and sound recognition. For example, it is difficult for those learners to draw a straight line, handle a book, write within lines and hold pencils. Learners are afraid of others when they have to read alone. Learners read without knowing or understanding the words they read. In most cases they memorise words without proper pronunciation and understanding.

Sometimes the background of the learners contributes to their difficulties. Some learners whose parents have died are raised by their grand parents. Some learners' parents' are irresponsible. Some learners come from rural areas where they live with parents who are either irresponsible or illiterate and cannot help learners with their school work.

Lack of suitable learning support materials and exposure to an environment that is conducive for teaching and learning affects the learner's acquisition of reading and writing skills.

Learners sometimes read pictures instead of reading words or sentences. They sometimes use their own concepts instead of the given concepts. Learners sometimes omit words or letters while looking at them and ignore making spaces when writing.

#### **4.7.2 Teachers' comments on challenges faced by Foundation Phase teachers**

Teachers were asked to comment on the challenges faced by Foundation Phase teachers in the facilitation of reading and writing. Following is a summary of the points they raised. Details will be presented in Chapter 5.

One of the challenges teachers mentioned was lack of proper workshops conducted by the department of education in facilitating reading and writing skills. The language of teaching and learning, if it is different to the learners' mother tongue, makes it difficult for teachers to develop learners' reading and writing skills. Some teachers whose mother tongues are different to those of the learners find it difficult to explain to the learners in translation. Lack of adequate resources was cited as another challenge for teachers. For example, reading books affect facilitation of reading and writing skills of teachers for learners.

The physical environment of the school and its locality affects what learners are exposed to. For instance, learners are not exposed to many things because their school is in a rural area. Writing and reading are not taken seriously by teachers unlike in the past where there was a specific time for reading and writing skills. The policy of pass one pass all in Foundation Phase is a challenge because learners proceed to the next grades without acquiring reading and writing skills.

#### **4.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the findings of the empirical investigation conducted to determine the challenges faced by teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners,

and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase. From what has been discussed and studied, one can conclude that in order to balance the levels of learning with accelerating changes taking place in education, continuous teacher empowerment is needed. It should be done in order to meet the demands, changes and expectations of learners and build a solid foundation for learners.

Extending the horizons of knowledge, skills and expertise in a constantly and rapidly changing environment needs to be planned as an instrument. Teachers should therefore make use of strategies, skills and every available opportunity to improve and develop themselves. By taking the initiatives and actively searching for information, the teacher will succeed. The findings of this study revealed that, teacher empowerment is seen as a key factor in a quality school and this is the main responsibility of teachers.

The chapter that follows outlines the summary of the study on challenges faced by teachers in facilitating acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase (Grade R-3). The findings of the study are outlined as well as the recommendations as to how the teachers should acquire the skills of facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills which will allow the learners to perform well.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the study conducted by the researcher on teachers and learners about the challenges faced by teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills. This chapter also presents the major findings of the study as well as recommendations for the improvement on the learners' reading and writing skills which remain untapped.

#### 5.2 SUMMARY

This section of the chapter encompasses all the important materials found in the previous chapters in a nutshell.

In chapter 1, concern is raised about the background of learners' acquisition of reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase. The argument is raised about the challenges faced by foundation learners in that regard. It appears that this is due to the inadequate experience and qualifications that teachers possess in the field of teaching Foundation Phase. (Government Report in Education Curriculum 2005 of 2008).

Chapter 2, placed emphasis literature on the learners' acquisition of reading and writing skills and what studies have revealed about learner's challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills as well as challenges teachers face in facilitating reading and writing skills

Chapter 3, presented a detailed description of the methodology followed in the study. That included procedures that were employed to address the question, that is, to examine what challenges are faced by teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing in Foundation Phase (Grade R – 3).

Chapter 4 concentrated on the analysis and interpretation of data that was collected. Data collected clearly indicated the perception of teachers on the challenges faced by teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing in Foundation Phase (Grade R – 3).

### **5.3 FINDINGS FROM BOTH THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND EMPIRICAL STUDY ON CHALLENGES FACED BY LEARNERS IN ACQUIRING READING AND WRITING SKILLS IN FOUNDATION PHASE (GRADE R – 3)**

These are the findings concerning the main objective of the study. With regard to the main objective, namely, to determine the challenges faced by learners in acquiring reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase. (cf 1.4) the following findings were made:

- The literature indicates that learners need to feel safe and are easily intimidated by an unpleasant atmosphere which will prevent them from learning effectively (cf 2.2.1). This finding is confirmed by teachers in the study who state that “learners are still afraid of others when they are supposed to read alone.”
- Sometimes the learners' background contributes to their poor performance in reading and writing. Some learners are raised by grandparents because their own parents have passed away. Other learners are raised by irresponsible parents; some parents cannot read or write so they cannot help their children with their school work. This, according to the majority of the respondents is an indication of lack of parental involvement. As one respondent commented:

*Most of the learners in Foundation Phase cannot read and write because they lack motivation and support from their parents.*

- Another finding from the literature reveals that maturation and growth differences among children might account for a particular child's reading problem. Reading readiness for

example might vary from five to eight years (cf 2.10.3). This finding is confirmed in the empirical findings where several teachers point out that the main problem is that the majority of learners did not attend preschool. Here is what one teacher said:

*Most of the learners didn't attend preschool therefore they come to school being not ready. They memorise the text when reading and cannot remember how many different or similar words he/she has seen or heard.*

- The literature reveals that learning problems might be caused by a variety of physical disabilities which either singly or jointly account for a child's problem (cf 2.10.3.7). Learners may experience reading skills physical impairment whereby a learner who is short sighted or blind encounters problems in reading and cannot read letters and shapes correctly or even recognise their similarities. This finding is echoed by the teachers' comments in the empirical study concerning learners who have not been exposed to preschool. These learners find it difficult to move with letter shape and sound recognition because they are not well trained in gross motor and fine motor skills. It often takes a lot of time for such learners to understand some things, for example, drawing a straight line, book handling, writing in lines and holding a pencil.

#### **5.4 THE RESEARCHER'S FINDINGS ON LEARNERS' TEST**

These are the findings concerning the main objective of the study. With regard to the main objective, namely, to determine the challenges faced by teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills in Foundation Phase (Grade R – 3). (cf 4.6) the following findings were made:

- Learners at Grade R have reading and spelling problems, which might be the result of wrong eye movement in reading. For example, the eyes keep jumping back along a line instead of going forward ( cf 2.10.4).

This problem of reading and spelling was evident in the Grade R test takers' performance on the question in which they had to copy given letters, but were unable to write them

correctly in the lines. Poor performance in the same question demonstrates inadequate experience in eye-hand co-ordination and inadequate experience visual and auditory discrimination. The eye-hand co-ordination problem was identified by the teachers in their comments on challenges faced by learners in acquiring reading and writing skills. Most of the teachers indicated that learners lack eye-hand co-ordination; they reverse letters. Learners are unable to copy accurately and complete the task. They are unable to remember what they have read or seen, and this creates problems in reading and writing skills.

- One of the findings from the empirical study is that the majority of Grade 1 learners from a written test were weak in vowels. Many of them failed to master the question which required them to underline the correct vowels. This finding is supported in the literature which states that children often make phonetic mistakes such as : “telfone” instead of “telephone”, “aloud” instead of “allowed”. They often confuse vowels and consonants. For instance, they write “came” for “game”, and “same” for “shame”(cf 2.10.4).
- In their comments on learners’ challenges, teachers indicated that sometimes learners fail to choose the correct words or sentences, which are provided for them to describe a picture. Instead, they use their own concepts and not the given sentences. This problem is evident in the Grade 3 learners’ test, question 2. Learners were not able to choose the correct sentences to describe the given pictures. Moreover, learners were not able to construct their own sentences using capital letters and punctuation marks.

## **5.5 FINDINGS FROM BOTH THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND EMPIRICAL STUDY ON CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN FACILITATING THE ACQUISITION OF READING AND WRITING SKILLS BY LEARNERS IN FOUNDATION PHASE (GRADE R – 3)**

The study revealed that Montshioa Stadt cluster Foundation Phase teachers have challenges in teaching learners to acquire the skills of reading and writing. There is a lot of misunderstanding by teachers in the use of different strategies and models of teaching reading and writing skills. In their comments on the questionnaire item about challenges

faced by Foundation Phase teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners in the Foundation Phase, teachers attributed both the learners' challenges and the teachers' challenges in facilitating the acquisition of these skills to the National Curriculum Statement .

Amongst curriculum -related complaints raised by the Foundation Phase teachers in their responses, were the following:

- The complex language usage and confusing terminology used in the National Curriculum Statement documents, such as the use of meaningless jargon and vague language; the unnecessary use of unfamiliar terms to replace familiar ones and the lack of a common understanding and use of National Curriculum Statement terminology. Teachers are inadequately trained. People, who conduct workshops, simply read what is written in a guide and ask the teachers to go home to read the document and implement its contents at school without a clear understanding of what is required of them to deliver in the classroom. Therefore teachers fail to practice quality teaching of reading and writing (cf 2.11).
- The curriculum in its original form did not give teachers a clear sense of knowledge and skills they needed to cover in each grade. The implementation was rushed and this led to inadequate improvement in the teacher's level of understanding. Evaluation is also poor, education specialists are not evaluating teachers to see if they are on the right track and assist where possible. Education specialists are lazy to do their work and teachers also become lazy. Hence teachers' competence in facilitating learner's skills of reading and writing is very poor. Despite training, teachers are often confused when faced with such radical changes in the curriculum and as a result, they struggle to apply the new ideas in the classroom. In a sense they seem to lose some ability to put theory into practice. Teachers are not able to put into practice what they were taught and learnt at different colleges and universities (cf 2.11). In their comments on the questionnaire, teachers indicated that there is a problem of reading and writing and that is due to the ongoing changes of the curriculum. The policy of pass one pass all in Foundation Phase is a challenge because learners proceed to the next grade before they have acquired reading and writing skills.

- Teachers also complained about the unavailability of teaching and learning resources. The problem with learning support materials to take the curriculum forward ranged from their availability, quality and use to the training in their use which teachers were given. The quality variable is the result of the design flowing in curriculum and the unreliability of the evaluation process. The Department of Education gives the schools the same amount of money to go and buy the books of their own choice, but the schools are normally choosing the wrong books. Some schools are using the money for the wrong things which are not allocated for. They might use the money for sport transport purposes instead of buying books. The absence of basic resources such as pencils, exercise books and duplicating machines in many schools increases the problems. In the majority of context, teachers did not have time, resources and skills to develop or to improve their own materials. All two areas for example, quality teaching use and availability of resources are accordingly required attention (cf 2.11). When reflecting from the open-ended questions of the questionnaire, teachers responded that there are no relevant teaching support materials for the beginner readers. Overcrowding in classrooms is also a problem which does not allow the teacher to pay special attention to individual learners.
- According to research survey conducted by the researcher at the Montshioa Stadt Cluster in 2010, other teachers are concerned about the overcrowded classrooms. They said that they are not able to attend to learners who have problems of reading and writing skills because of overcrowded classrooms (cf 2.11) Challenges faced by teachers in the teaching of reading and writing skills. Certain learning problems in the child might be traced back directly to the teacher. Teachers who are not dedicated to their tasks have a greater demoralising influence in a child. An indolent, uninspired teacher creates an uninspired atmosphere in class.
- Introducing reading and writing from Grade R to Grade 3 (cf 2.3.2). There are some teachers who do not regard literacy as a subject having a specific scheduled period.
- Making reading and writing connection explicit (cf 2.3.3.). Teachers are not teaching reading and writing as an explicit or direct instruction, they are not supervising the learners. They are not using the skill at the right time.-

- Teach reading and writing in a meaningful context (cf 2.3.4). The teachers are not considering the central point which indicates that learners must have opportunities to integrate reading and writing in a variety of literature experiences.
- The role of extensive reading in language learning (cf. 2.3.7). The teachers are not taking certain precautions into consideration when teaching reading which include adequate exposure to the language, interesting material and tension free environment.
- Methods of reading instructions (cf. 2.3.7). There are methods of reading which the teachers are not considering, example, the *Phonic Method*, the *Look and Say Method* and the *Combined Method*.
- Reading as a meaningful, active, constructive and strategic process was outlined (cf 2.3.11). Teachers are not using the appropriate strategies when teaching reading.
- Learning problems in learners are mostly likely to develop if the teacher offers too much reading content of information which they cannot effectively make their own. Poor organisation and systematisation of the learning content cannot lead to effective learning in learners (cf 2.10.1), for example in the Grade 1 administered test to learners, learners were not able to construct words in question 2 because of the poor organisation and systematisation of learning content by teachers.
- Some teachers fail to take cognizance of individual differences (cf 2.10.1).
- Some teachers openly reject a learner in class (cf 2.10.1).
- Some teachers are emphasising the wrong methods and offer inadequate guidance in class (cf 2.10.1).
- The researcher also discovered this problem in the administered questionnaire in the open-ended questions where teachers are complaining about the new curriculum approach, by using a lot of terminology and fail to train teachers up to the required standards.
- When relating with the response from teachers in the questionnaire, teachers indicated that writing is not taken seriously by teachers unlike in the past approach where there was a specific time for writing skills. When reflecting from the learners' administered test in question four of Grade 1, learners failed to write the proper spelling and also their vowels and consonants are not organised.

- This has been revealed from the response of teachers in the questionnaire where teachers indicated that most of the learners in Foundation Phase read without understanding. They just write the words without listening the sound first. They are very weak in listening and in phonetics. Teachers are not creating a room for concentration in learners. The researcher found this in the learners' administered test from Grade 1 in question 2 where learners were not able to construct the words with the given letters, which were not emphasised by teachers before.
- When reflecting from the questionnaire teachers indicated that teachers are not teaching learners to construct sentences. Learners read without knowledge of words and understanding. In the most cases they do memorise words without proper pronunciation and understanding. They are very poor in reading and writing spelling and dictation from the reading books is a concern. Learners failed to pass the construction of sentences in Grade 3 in question 5 of the administered test which is the result of that lack of strategic process in reading and writing by teachers.

### 5.5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations focus on what teachers should do in order to improve their facilitation skills of reading and writing on learners as well as learners to acquire the skills of reading and writing.

**Recommendation 1:** Learners require substantial literacy development

#### **Motivation**

Quality education is determined in the first years that a child spends at school. The foundations of human development are laid during the child's early years. The most important period of life is not the age of university studies, but the first one, the period from birth to the age of six. This period is quality education's "golden hour", those years in which a child is taught the fundamental skills and competencies that will enable him or her to learn and develop a clear conception of the world. The "golden hour" in education begins in the Foundation Phase, Grades R to 3 and is consolidated in the intermediate phase in Grade 4 to 6. It is in this "golden hour" that a child learns to read so that in the future they can read to teach (Piaget, 1952: 282).

In the Foundation Phase children learn to express themselves, to put their thoughts on paper, to describe and later to explain the world around them. They begin to understand the concept and the power of numbers. The capacity to read and write well is in the foundation of quality education. It is recommended that the integration of knowledge and skills should be addressed within a specific Learning Area as well as across learning areas. Reading and writing of grammar should be integrated in the teaching and assessing processes with regard to the learning outcomes as well.

The literacy learning programme should focus on the following learning outcomes (National Department of Education, 2001:17):

- Learning outcome 1 – the learner is able to listen for information and enjoyment and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations.
- Learning outcome 2 – the learner is able to communicate confidently and effectively in spoken language in a wide range of situations.
- Learning outcome 3 – the learner is able to read and view for information and enjoyment and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts.
- Learning outcome 4 – the learner is able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes.
- Learning outcome 5 – the learner is able to use language to think and reason and access process and use information for learning.
- Learning outcome 6 – the learner knows and is able to use the sounds, vocabulary and grammar of an additional language.

**Recommendation 2:** A course in English and Setswana is needed for all the learners

### **Motivation**

A child should learn Setswana language properly first, then the teacher can start teaching the English language. Children who learn two languages in a supportive environment are respected and encouraged for their well-being in learning both languages well. Children who learn two languages in a stressful environment may have language development problems – but so will children learning only one language in that same sort of environment.

Real bilinguals never mix their languages. Bilingual children and adults sometimes, often mix their languages. Monolingual people think this is strange, but monolingual people also use foreign words and phrases, slips of the tongue and slang. Language is, after all, a form of human behaviour. Many if not most, bilingual children will often use both languages at once during the early stages of their language development.

**Recommendation 3:** Staff must have expertise to offer introductory units in dramatisation as a demonstration and debating as one way the learners to express themselves.

**Motivation:**

Each day learners are encouraged to demonstrate for their group their use of strategies for the unfamiliar text they have underlined in the morning letters. Learners discuss the rationale and the appropriateness of choosing particular strategies. On some occasions they ask appropriate guiding questions of each other. Finally, learners are required to summarise their main message in the text without memorising each work. The success of this kind of lesson is dependent on maintaining a risk-free environment for learners. The main objective is for the learners to become aware of what they need to be thinking while they read.

A large part of guided reading is talking about reading and the teacher's role should be to maintain the class conversation. Occasionally some modelling of the use of reading strategies is necessary, but most of the time the teacher's role is to invoke the learner's responses based on their own thoughts and opinions about the reading process. A passive learner will not benefit from an instructor's modelling as much as he or she will from active participation. In time, learners learn to independently ask themselves these same questions and eventually internalise strategies, self monitoring becomes automatic. As the Foundation Phase curriculum applies for three to seven year olds, it is essential that there is continuity of planning for children's development. Teachers need to be aware of what has been taught in the previous year and in the attainment of individual learners.

**Recommendation 4:** Parents need to be visited to investigate the source of the learners' problems.

**Motivation:**

The responsibility to teach our children to read and write is not the teacher's responsibility alone. That responsibility is shared with parents as well. Parents' obligations do not end with payment of school fees, or taxi fares to get their child to a school that offers quality education. It is their responsibility to ensure that their homework is done and that their children read them or to them every day. Not only will parents be giving their child the best possible grounding in life, but they will also build a bond with their child that can never be broken and that in itself is important in a world where parents and children so easily drift apart.

**Recommendation 5:** Parents should be requested to visit the school at the end of each term to check the books of learners.

**Motivation:**

Parents should visit the school at the end of each term to discuss some issues with the teachers, to check the learner's books and to check what help they can offer in terms of helping learners how to read and write.

**Recommendation 6:** Regular workshops should be held for newly appointed teachers and also experienced teachers.

**Motivation:**

A survey of Foundation Phase teachers done by the researcher indicated that more than half of the teachers were not satisfied with their initial training to teach reading to beginners and indicated a need for further training in this regard. This need may be due to the expectations raised by the new Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach of Curriculum 2005, which caused uncertainty because teachers were not sure what was expected from them. It is also possible that the emphasis on lifelong learning may encourage the need for further training in teaching reading and writing to beginners. The purpose of the regular workshops will be to empower teachers to teach reading in

the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and National Curriculum Statement (NCS) education system.

**Recommendation 7:** Learners should be given the intervention forms to fill to show that they deserve to remain in the same classes.

### **Motivation**

The researcher has identified that most of the learners moved to the next levels without acquiring the required skills of reading and writing. The Department of Education uses the age cohort to promote those learners. This causes serious problems in the next levels.

### **Recommendation 8**

Remedial or corrective actions should be taken once the learning problems have been identified. The teacher then can help the learners by means of remedial work in order to enable them to acquire the necessary skills. If the problems are more serious, the children might be given a complete remedial or corrective programme in addition to their normal class work. Children with even more serious problems should be referred to the school of psychological services or to child guidance clinic.

### **Motivation**

There are some learners who are not able to read and write in the Foundation Phase, but are promoted to the next levels and grades without any remedial work provided to them. This is escalating the problem of reading and writing skills.

### **Recommendation 9:**

Department of Education and Non-governmental organisations should be asked to help in terms of resources. The call must go to the Department of Education and Non-governmental organisations to join hands with the local school community and assist them with the resources to reach the goals of universal competency in reading and writing skills.

## **Motivation**

Most of the schools are lacking resources to enable the learners to read and write which is the responsibility of the Department of Education to provide with the relevant resources.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

A few limitations of this study need to be mentioned. Firstly, the data are from a convenient sample of teachers. The sample size is small and limited to one cluster, thus producing a restricted dataset. The findings should therefore be treated as tentative and not necessarily generalizable to all Grade R-3 teachers. The findings would be more representative if a larger sample would be used. However, notwithstanding these limitations, an important finding is that teachers need good training in the facilitation of the acquisition of reading and writing skills by Grade R-3 learners.

## **5.7 FINAL CONCLUSION**

The school is a social institution entrusted with the responsibility of continuing and supplementing the process of learning and socialisation begun at home. As an institution, the school has to have policies and effective learning. The role of teachers in controlling problems originating outside the school is rather limited. On the other hand, they are capable of influencing learners' competence as they interact with them on the school premises and in the classroom. Teachers can facilitate reading and writing skills by seeing that their learners are well developed, ensuring that they are prepared for their lessons and these lessons must be presented in an interesting and professional manner and ensuring that their classrooms are well ventilated, not overcrowded and neither too hot nor cold. The teacher should also strive to offer courses relevant to the learner's needs.

According to research survey conducted by the researcher at the Montshioa Stadt Cluster in 2010, teachers currently teaching reading and writing in the Foundation Phase indicated a need for further training in the teaching of reading and writing skills. The workshops should be presented with the aim of empowering teachers in the Foundation Phase to teach reading and writing within the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) and National Curriculum Statement (NSC) frameworks. The findings from the questionnaire indicate that experienced teachers became more aware of their

need to know more about reading instruction. Extensive reading programmes can provide very effective platforms for promoting reading improvement and development from elementary levels upwards. Although they do not require a significant investment in time, energy and resources on the part of those charged with managing materials, the benefit in terms of language and skills development for the participating learners far outweigh the modest sacrifices required.

The research which emphasises motivational factors, particularly cognitive ones, in attitude development points out the importance of individual differences in both the rate and content of attitude formation. Thus, both parents and teachers should be aware that individual levels of cognitive maturity have an important role in the way children interpret the socialisation messages they receive. Finally, research exploring the relationship between cognitive development and social learning implies that every early learning experience may be more important determinants of later attitude development than was previously thought. If the above is taken into cognizance, it has reading implications for teacher training. It will be worthwhile for Teacher Training Institutions to include these recommendations in planning for future training programmes.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A:**

Letter of requests to complete a questionnaire

### **Appendix B:**

Letter of request to administer test to learners

### **Appendix C:**

Questionnaire

### **Appendix D:**

Permission Letter from the APO to collect data from schools

### **Appendix E:**

Permission Letter from the APO to administer test to learners

### **Appendix F:**

Test for learners

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF REQUEST TO COMPLETE A QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Colleague

I am conducting an evaluative developmental study for my Masters Degree studies. The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges faced by Foundation Phase teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills in Foundation Phase. This is in line with the fact that learners have the problem of the acquisition of reading and writing in the cluster and serious remediation of the problem is necessary.

This study has been organised to investigate the learners' subject content knowledge; their learning skills and the models of reading that they may use to improve their reading and writing acquisition. I hope that the feedback I get from you will help me to develop a new model of teacher professional development to be used in Montshioa Stadt Cluster.

You are therefore requested to assist in this exercise by answering questions and responding to given statements for me to establish your views.

Your responses will be confidentially treated. Thanks for your anticipated responses.

There is one questionnaire you are requested to respond to and it is intended to establish your personal view of the challenges faced by teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase (Grade R – 3).

Thank You

Yours Sincerely

  
.....  
Pule Lazarus Itumeleng

## APPENDIX B

### LETTER OF REQUEST TO ADMINISTER TEST TO LEARNERS

Dear Colleague

I am conducting an evaluative developmental study for my Masters degree studies. The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges faced by Foundation Phase teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills in Foundation Phase. This is in line with the fact that learners have the problem of the acquisition of reading and writing in the cluster and serious remediation of the problem is necessary.

This study has been organised to investigate the learners' subject content knowledge; their learning skills and the models of reading that they may use to improve their reading and writing acquisition. I hope that the feedback I will get from you will help me to develop a new model of teacher professional development to be used in Montshioa Stadt Cluster.


You are therefore requested to assist in this exercise by administering the test to learners to establish their skills of reading and writing.

Your responses will be confidentially treated. Thanks for your anticipated responses.

There are four question papers you are requested to give the learners. These are intended to establish the learners' acquisition of reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase (Grade R – 3).

Thank You

Yours Sincerely

  
.....

Pule Lazarus Itumeleng

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information on educators about the challenges faced by teachers in facilitating the acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners, and learners' challenges in acquiring reading and writing skills in the foundation phase.

**SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Kindly answer the following questions by crossing the appropriate block

**1. AGE CATEGORY**

1	Below 30	
2	31-35	
3	36-40	
4	41-45	
5	51 and above	

**2. GENDER**

1	Male	
2	Female	

**3. EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING FOUNDATION PHASE**

1	0-5	
2	6-10	
3	11-15	
4	16-20	
5	21 and above	

**4. PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION**

1	Certificate	
2	2 years Diploma	
3	3 years Diploma	
4	Degree	

5	Honours	
6	others	

### 5. SKILLS NEEDED

Rate the level of importance of the following statements. Do you think it is important that the learners should possess the following skills?

		Very important	important	Not important
1	Letter-word identification requires learners to identify symbols, letters and words.	3	2	1
2	The task progresses from matching the picture of an object with a rebus to identify isolated letters and words.	3	2	1
3	The task progresses in difficulty to words that are less frequently used in the English language and are irregular in spelling	3	2	1
4	Word attack measures the ability to pronounce printed, unfamiliar letter strings by applying phonic and structural analysis skills.	3	2	1
5	To read pseudo words that are linguistically logical	3	2	1

6. Progress through the early stages of reading and writing. Make a cross to reflect your opinion

	Do your learners have the experience of:	YES	NO
1	Observing an adult reading?		
2	Shared / guided reading?		
3	Matching picture cues to words?		
4	Sequencing pictures to create a story?		
5	Looking at and discussing patterns in words?		
6	Shape of letters and words?		
7	Using and looking at common words?		

8	Breaking down words into letters?		
9	Creating simple sentences in groups and individually?		
10	Early stages of punctuation?		

**SECTION C**

Generally comment on the challenges faced by foundation learners in the acquisition of reading and writing.

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**SECTION D**

Generally comment on the challenges faced by foundation educators in the facilitation and acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners.

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# education

Lefapha la Thuto  
Onderwys Departement  
Department of Education  
NORTH WEST PROVINCE

corner Thelesho Tawana and  
Modiri Molema Road  
Montshioa  
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e-mail: sralele@nwpg.gov.za

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**OFFICE OF THE AREA MANAGER: REKOPANTSWE AREA OFFICE  
NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA DISTRICT**

---

**ENQUIRIES:** MR B.A. ITUMELENG

**DATE:** 13 May 2009

**TO:** PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS  
EDUCATORS  
SGB's  
MONTSHIOA – STADT CLUSTER

**FROM:** THE AREA MANAGER  
REKOPANTSWE AREA OFFICE

**SUBJECT:** REQUEST TO COLLECT DATA FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH PURPOSES –  
PULE LAZARUS ITUMELENG

The above mentioned educator has been granted permission to collect data from schools on the Montshioa-stadt cluster for research purposes.

Your co-operation and support in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely



**B.A. ITUMELENG**  
**CIRCUIT MANAGER**



## education

Lefapha la Thuto  
Onderwys Departement  
Department of Education  
NORTH WEST PROVINCE

### APPENDIX E:

corner Thelesho Tawana and  
Modiri Molema Road  
Montshioa  
Tel.: (018) 384-1412  
Tel.: (018) 384-1426  
Tel.: (018) 392-6204  
e-mail: sraleie@nwpg.gov.za

---

**OFFICE OF THE AREA MANAGER: REKOPANTSWE AREA OFFICE  
NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA DISTRICT**

---

**ENQUIRIES:** MR B.A. ITUMELENG

**DATE:** 10 August 2010

**TO:** PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS  
EDUCATORS  
SGB's  
MONTSHIOA – STADT CLUSTER

**FROM:** THE AREA MANAGER  
REKOPANTSWE AREA OFFICE

**SUBJECT:** REQUEST TO ADMINISTER TEST FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH  
PURPOSES – PULÉ LAZARUS ITUMELENG

The above mentioned educator has been granted permission to administer test to learners on reading and writing skills in the foundation phase for research purposes.

Your co-operation and support in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely



B.A. ITUMELENG  
CIRCUIT MANAGER

# APPENDIX F

LEARNING AREA: LITERACY

EXAMINER: MR P.L ITUMELENG

TAST TEST

GRADE: R

DATE: 25-08-2010

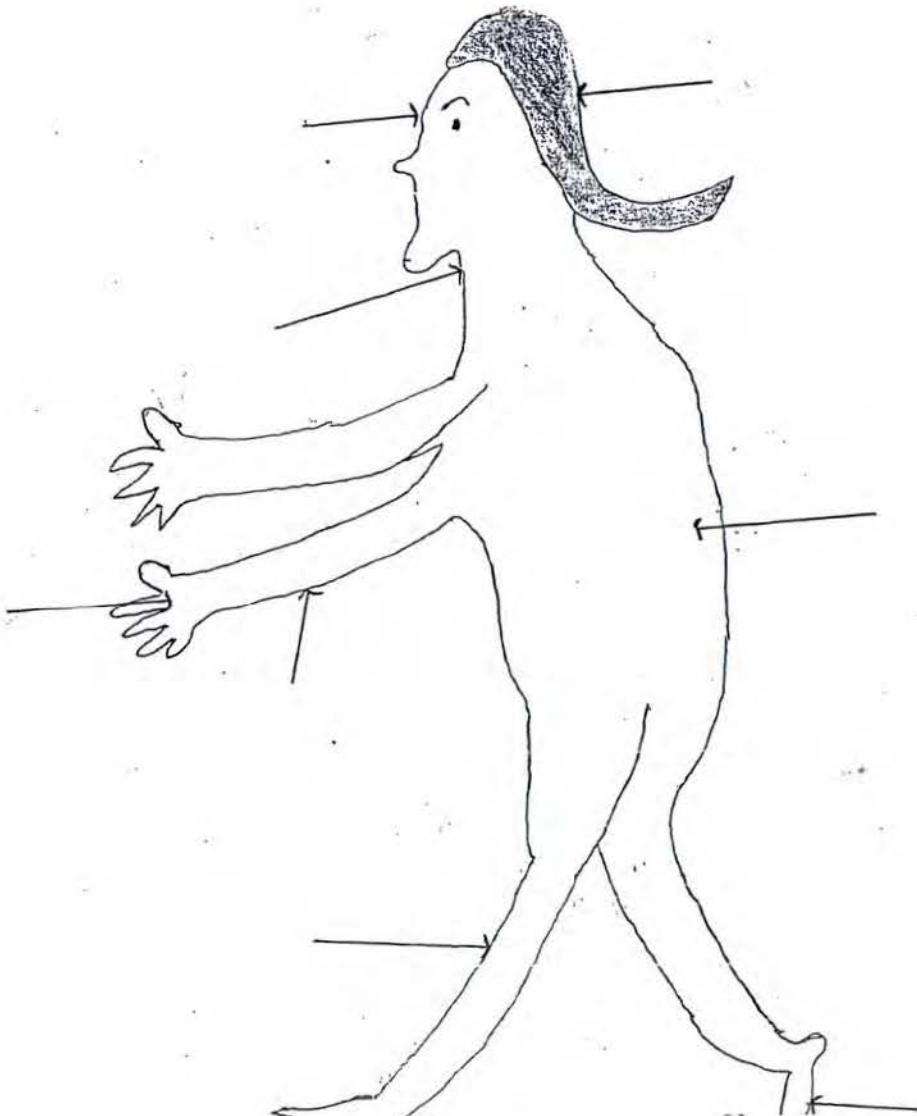
MARKS: 20

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer all questions
- Write neatly and legibly

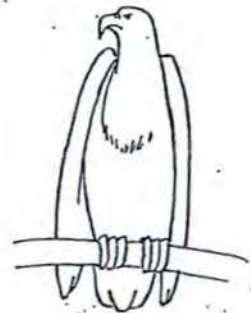
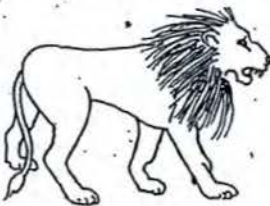
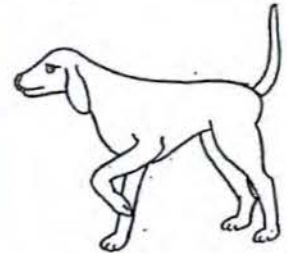
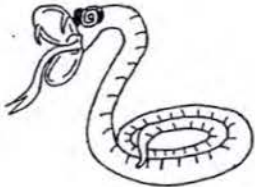
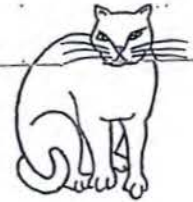
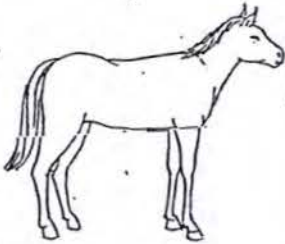
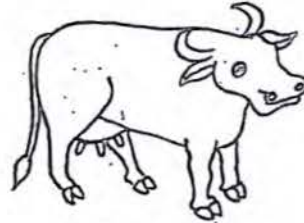
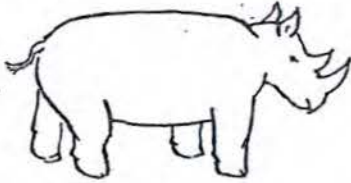
## QUESTION 1

Match the correct names to the body parts: hair, neck, face, hand, arm, body, foot, leg.



**QUESTION 2**

Cut out, write and paste the animals in the correct column.



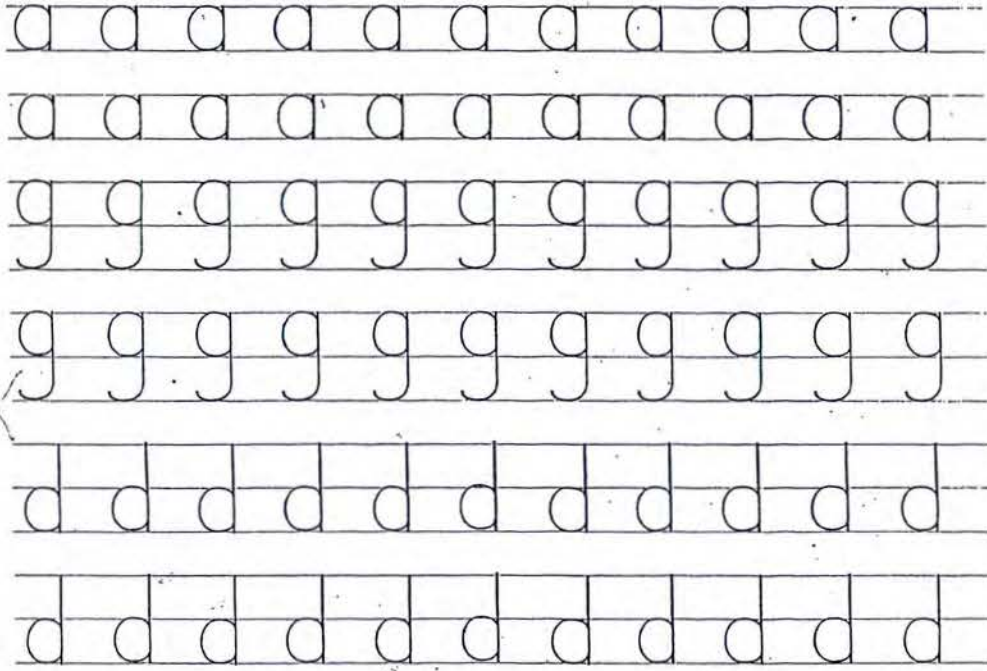
wild	tame

Wild or tame animals?

**QUESTION 3**

Writing

Copy the following letters



**LEARNING AREA:** LITERACY      **EXAMINER:** P.L ITUMELENG  
**TASK** : TEST  
**GRADE** : 1  
**DATE** : 25-08-2010  
**MARKS** : 20  
**DURATION** : 1 HOUR

**Instructions**

- Answer all the questions
- Write neatly, and legibly

**QUESTION 1 / POTSO 1**

Where is the vowel **a**?

Sekao: bang

1. katse
2. malome
3. ngwana
4. ntate

QUESTION 2/POTSO 2

Construct words.  
Popa mafoko

1.

n  
n a a  
g w



n \_\_\_\_\_

2.

a l e  
l



go l \_\_\_\_\_

3.

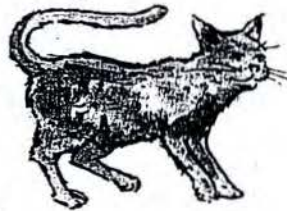
n t  
a  
t e



n \_\_\_\_\_

4.

k s a  
t  
e



k \_\_\_\_\_

5.



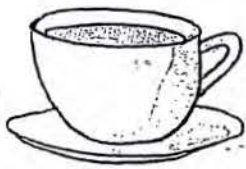


t s  
a y  
a a m



go t \_\_\_\_\_

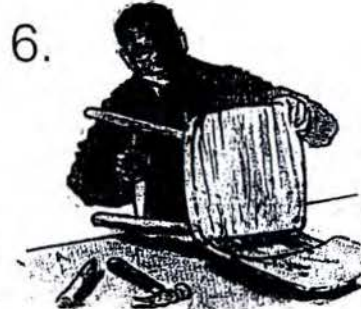
QUESTION 3/ POTSO 3

Nyalanya ditshwantsho le mafoko a a maleba.

1.		tee
2.		ntate
3.		ngwana
4.		go lela
5.		mme

QUESTION 4/POTSO 4

Complete the following sentences .  
Feleletsa dipolelo tse di latelang.



1. \_\_\_\_\_ o tsena ka mo ntlong.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ o thaya ditlhapi.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ o tshameka ka kgwele.

4. \_\_\_\_\_ o na le gategate.

5. \_\_\_\_\_ o gotsa molelo.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ o betla setilo.

mosadi
monna
mosimane
mosetsana

LEARNING AREA: LITERACY EXAMINER: P.L ITUMELENG  
TASK : TEST  
GRADE : 2  
DATE : 25-08-2010  
MARKS : 20  
DURATION : 1 HOUR

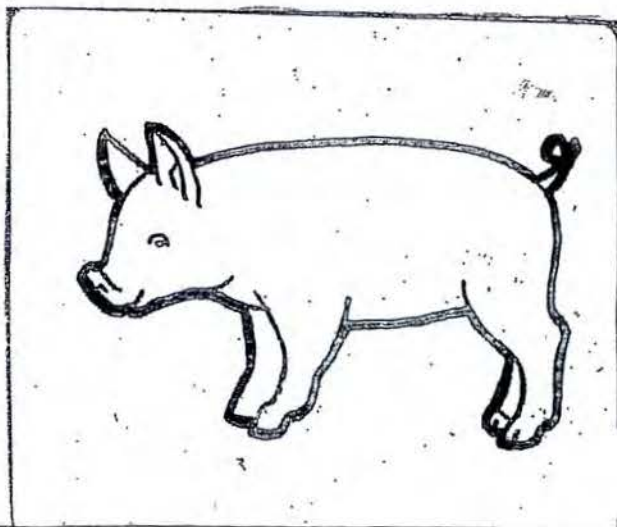
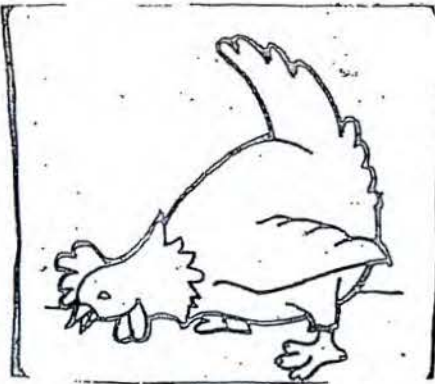
**Instructions**

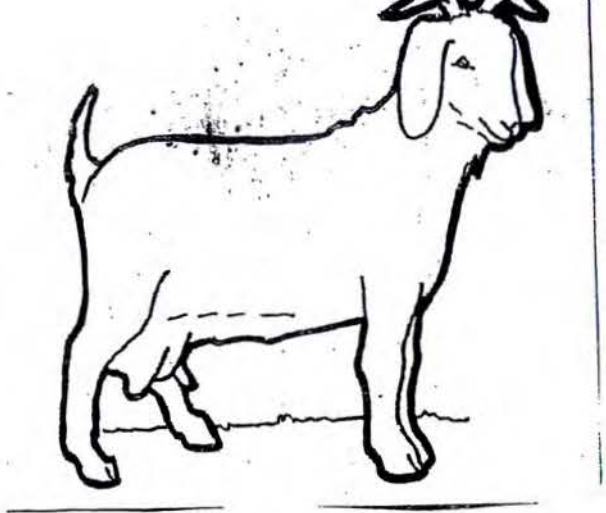
- Answer all the questions
- Write neatly, and legibly

**QUESTION 1 / POTSO 1**

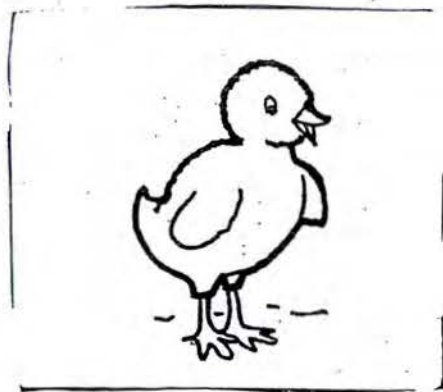
Choose the correct animal and its young ones and write the names which were given below under the pictures, cow, hen, chicken, kid, pig, calf, piglet.

Tlhopha phologolo le ngwana wa yona o bo o kwale maina a wa filweng ka fa tlase mo ditshwantshong tse o difilweng. Kgomo, koko, kokwana, potsane, podi, kolobe,

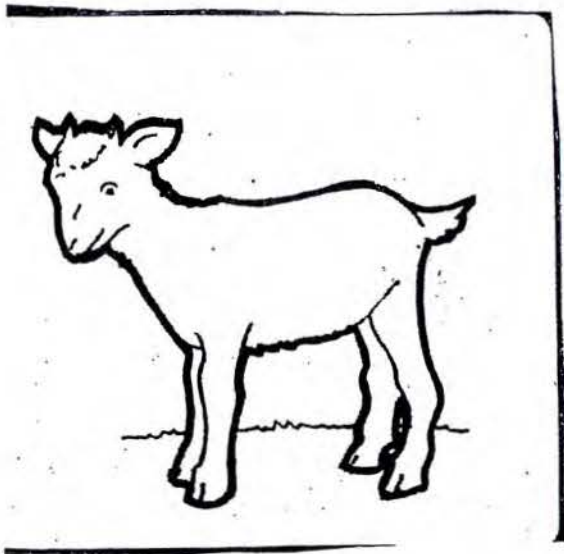




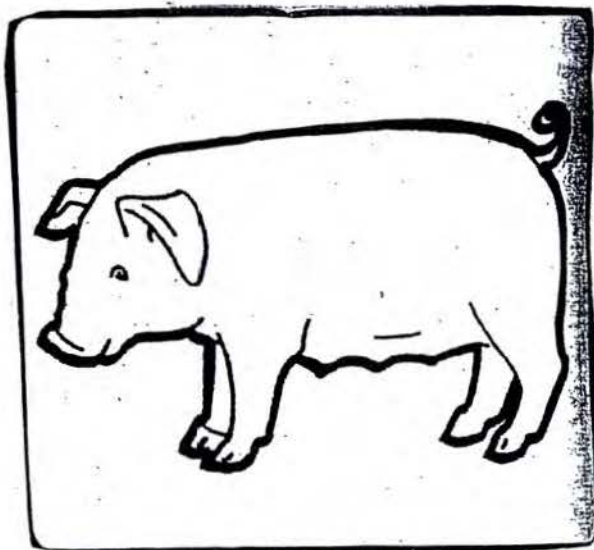
3.



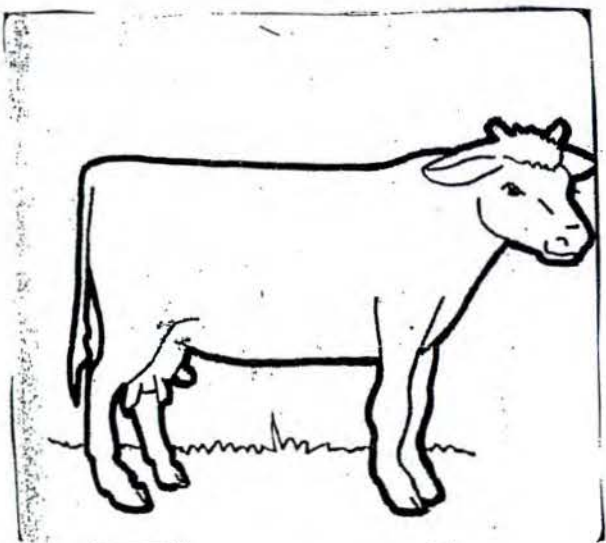
4.



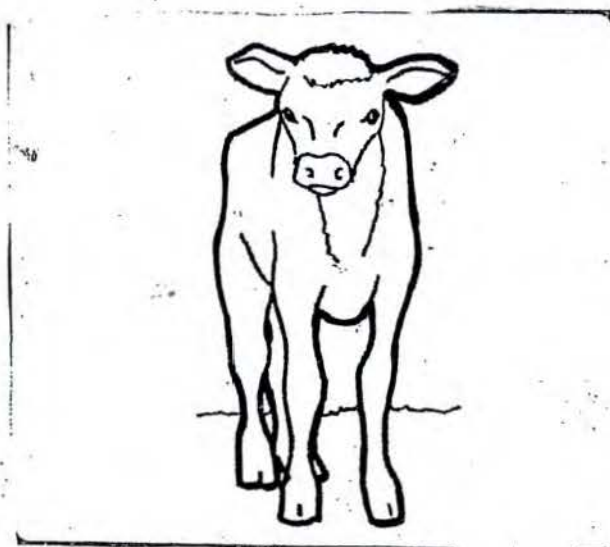
5.



6.



7.



8.

**QUESTION 2/POTSO 2**

Construct words with the given letters below.  
Bopa mafoko ka ditlhaka tse dilatelang.

1. a .....  
ba
2. a .....  
ga
3. a.....  
la
4. a.....  
ma
5. a.....  
di  
ma

[5]

**QUESTION 3/POTSO 3**

Fill in the missing letters in the following words by using days of the week.

Tlatsa ditlhaka tse ditlhaelang mo mafokong a a latelang, o dirisa malatsi a beke.

1. M s p l g
2. L b b d
3. L b r r
4. L b n
5. L b tlh n
6. L m tlh ts
7. L tsh p

[7]

TASK: TEST

GRADE: 3

DATE: 25-08-2010

MARKS: 30





DURATION: 1 HOUR

INSTRUCTIONS.

- Answer all questions
- Write neatly and legibly

QUESTION 1

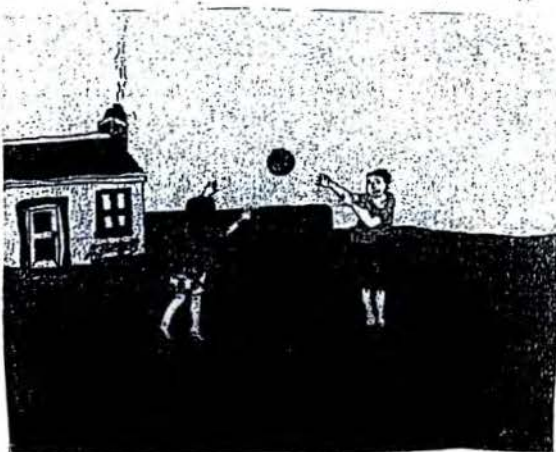
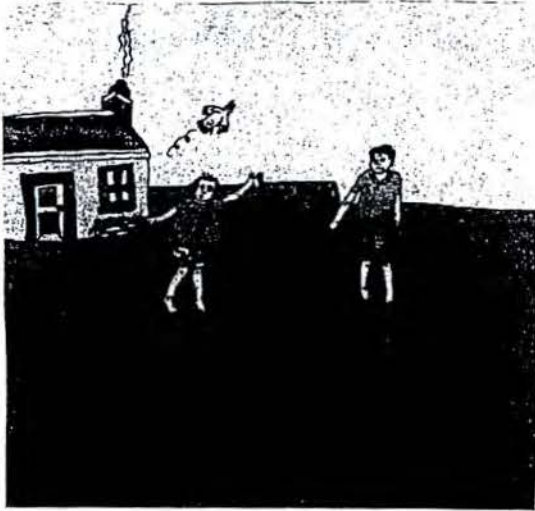
Choose the correct word to match the sentence.

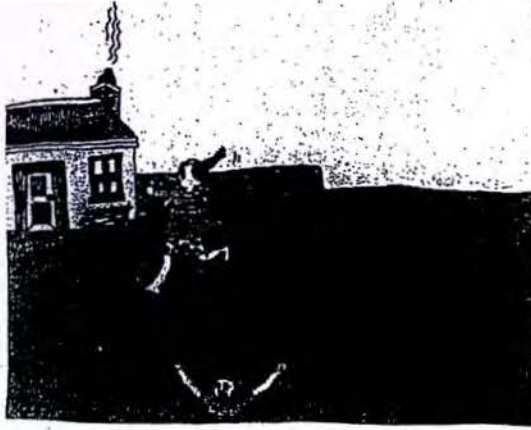
1. car care	This is a red _____.	
2. man mane	The _____ is tall.	
3. at ate	She _____ an apple.	
4. rat rate	I saw a big _____.	

## QUESTION 2

Look at the pictures. Choose the correct sentence that describes the picture from the sentences below. Place the sentences with the correct picture and in the right order. Use capital letter, commas and full stops.

- a. john falls into the dam.
- b. Sara screams, " help, john the ball fell in the dam"
- c. sara is scared to fetch the ball
- d. She can't swim in the dam
- e. John and sara play with the ball outside the house
- f. there is a dam near the house.
- g. sara runs to the house to call someone to help
- h. john tries to swim.
- i. the kids play in the garden with the ball





(6)

### QUESTION 3

Write down the words that match the pictures and sentences, but add -ing to the verb:

e.g. beg

The old man is begging

Shop

ring

fish

sing

fell

run

pet

hit

1. Mother is \_\_\_\_\_.



2. He is \_\_\_\_\_ the ball.



3. The bell is \_\_\_\_\_.



4. Ann is \_\_\_\_\_.



5. Father is \_\_\_\_\_ the dog.



6. John is \_\_\_\_\_.



7. Pete is \_\_\_\_\_.



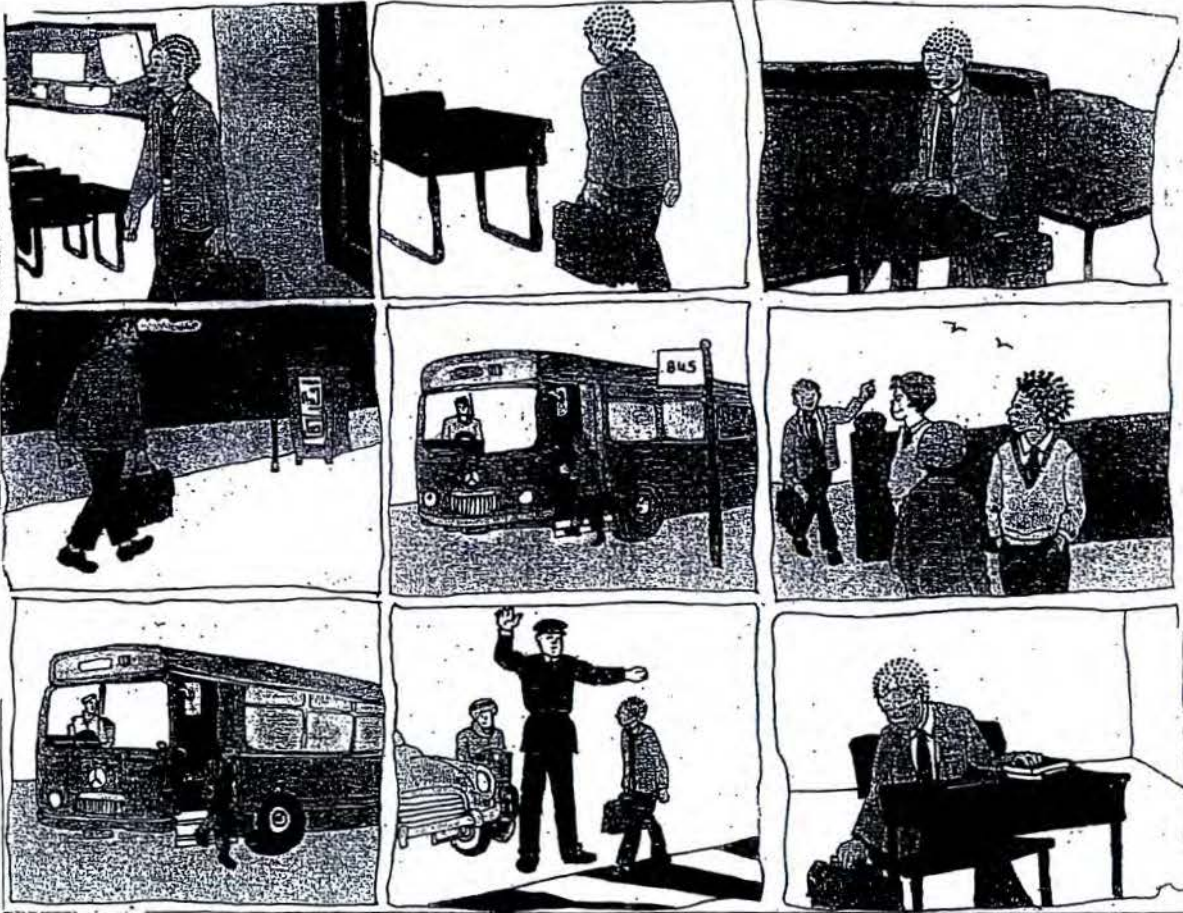
8. He is \_\_\_\_\_ the trees.



(8)

# QUESTION 4

Cut out the pictures below and put them in the order you think is correct.



**QUESTION 5**

Write sentences to form a paragraph about the story "Going to school". (use capital letters, full stops and commas).

(3)

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