

RHODES UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**TEACHING READING IN GRADE 4 NAMIBIAN CLASSROOMS: A
CASE STUDY**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Submitted by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this half-thesis entitled: Teaching reading in Grade 4 Namibian classrooms in the Otjozondjupa region, and submitted for the degree of Master of Education (English Second Language), is my own original work, and has not been submitted previously for a degree in any other university and institution.

Signed:

Date:

ABSTRACT

Literacy is currently a topic of great concern in Namibia. Learners in this country have difficulty in reading and writing, and are often functionally illiterate.

This study focuses on the beliefs, experiences and practices of teachers of reading in English to second language learners in Grade 4. Grade 4 is the transitional grade from mother tongue to English as the medium of instruction. The switch to English makes teaching reading in that language especially challenging.

The study is structured according to the case study mode of enquiry, with the target respondents comprising Grade 4 teachers. Classroom observation, interviews and document analysis were used as means of collecting data.

The main findings revealed that beliefs and experience had an impact on the way in which reading was taught in this study. It emerged that the teachers' childhood experiences of literacy and learning to read are perpetuated in their beliefs, their attitudes, their basic conceptualization of reading and their current practices, all of which directly affect the children in their classes.

Although the teachers' professional training also had some influence on their teaching methods, neither of the two teachers interviewed had received much in-service support on how to teach reading, and they depended to a large extent on their recall of how they had learned to read themselves. Both teachers were taught in a traditional, teacher-centered way, involving phonics, rote-learning and drilling. Because they see themselves as competent readers, they believe that these approaches were effective and worth sustaining.

Tentative recommendations arising from analysis of the data indicate possible areas for improvement in the teaching of reading, and offer guidelines to help teachers cope with the challenge.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BES II	Basic Education Support II
BETD	Basic Education Teachers' Diploma
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
BIS	Basic Information Science
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CUP	Common Underlying Proficiency
ECP	Education Certificate Primary
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Programmes
HED	Higher Education Diploma
IEA	International Education Association
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MBESC	Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
NELLP	Namibia Early Literacy and Language Project
NERA	Namibian Educational Research Association
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Skills
PS	Primary School
SACMEQ	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SIM	Structure Instructional Materials
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the background and setting of the research in the field of reading. It describes how the study arose and my personal interest in the research. From this interest the research goals and questions emerged. The chapter then introduces the reader to the context of the study area culminating in an overview of the thesis.

1.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

A major source of concern in Namibia is that learners have difficulty in reading and writing, and are often functionally illiterate. Blame is often put on the Lower Primary teachers for not preparing learners well at the foundation phase, where learners have to learn to read in both their mother tongue and English, which is their second language. There is real evidence that reading ability in Namibian schools is low; for example, results from the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ report, 2004) show that Namibia has the lowest average score in English reading comprehension in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region (Snyder, 1999).

1.3 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Grade 4 presents a particular challenge for learners and teachers with regard to reading as it is the year in which children switch from the mother tongue to English as the medium of instruction. This is challenging because children are used to learning through their mother tongue in Grades 1-3 and many of them speak English as a third or fourth language. Reading presents a special challenge because from Grade 4 onwards, all learning materials are written in English and learners must be fluent readers in this language in order to succeed at school.

I taught Grades 3-4 for 10 years before becoming an Advisory teacher, and I observed that learners from rural areas who had no books or printed material in their homes took longer to master the skill of reading. Learners from homes where reading materials such as magazines, newspapers and storybooks, were available learnt more easily.

Furthermore, not all the schools have libraries, especially those that are located in the peri-urban and rural areas. To further aggravate the situation there are no public libraries in some villages and settlements in the remote areas.

What triggered my interest in conducting research on teaching reading is that the issues of language and literacy acquisition are topical discussion points in Namibia. The Lower Primary phase is blamed, the arguments and assumptions being that the grounding in the foundation phase is not properly laid right through from Grades 1-4. Although this might be part of the problem, there may be other factors, for example, not all the children are immersed in the same type of supportive environment at both home and school where their literacy growth can be enhanced.

Furthermore my interest in this topic was sparked when I was invited to a workshop for Namibia's National Standards and Performance Indicators in February 2005. The starting point of this workshop was to look at the SACMEQ report. The report's findings were that learners in Grade 6 were unable to read text with understanding, and the discussions in this workshop centred around the high failure rate at Grade 10 and 12 levels. The report stated that Namibia recorded the lowest reading performances among countries in the SADC region. The picture painted was gloomy with only 29,5 percent of learners reaching the desired level of reading competence (Voigts, 1998).

This concerned me deeply as the Namibian government is investing more in education than many other African countries yet the expected benefits are not discernable (Namibia. Ministry of Education and Culture [MEC], 1993: 140). As an Advisory teacher for the Lower Primary phase, my interest in exploring the issue further was sparked, so I decided to focus on the teaching of reading in Grade 4, the transitional grade from mother tongue to English.

I decided to approach the topic from the perspective of teachers' experiences and perceptions about the teaching of reading and to explore how this influences their classroom instruction when teaching reading in English in Grade 4. Torres (as cited in Kajinga, 2005: 61) contends:

What teachers believe and how they behave in the classroom are shaped by their personal experiences, their instruction and formal knowledge. Consequently, the relevance of beliefs in teaching is that they inform what and how teachers teach, an influence that often derives from their experiences as students as well as from their formal training.

Therefore teachers' beliefs are shaped by the way they were taught in the past and trained; their experiences shape their practice in one way or another. Nisbett and Ross (as cited in Pajares, 1992) noted that early experiences strongly influence final judgements, which become theories (beliefs) highly resistant to change.

1.4 RESEARCH GOALS

The study aims to investigate what teachers actually do when teaching reading in Grade 4 and to identify the beliefs which inform their practice.

The following research questions guided my study:

- What are teachers' beliefs about teaching reading?
- How do they perceive reading?
- How is reading taught in selected English classes?

1.5. RESEARCH APPROACH

The research was conducted in the interpretive paradigm. This approach is appropriate for this research because it gives me an opportunity to understand teachers' practices in teaching reading in English in Grade 4. Bassey (1999: 40) sees:

... interpretive research as a category of empirical research. Interpretive research needs to have some of empirical elements to it in order to counter threats to validity. This is clearly found in structured data from which interpretation and understanding can be generated. Therefore the researcher tries to describe, interpret and explain what is happening without making any value judgments or trying to induce any change.

This research has an empirical dimension in that I investigate what actually happens when two teachers teach reading in English in Grade 4. My intention is to interpret their actions in relation to their beliefs about teaching reading.

I used semi-structured interview questions, classroom observations and document analysis in collecting data from the two teachers I selected for my study. I interviewed both the teachers in English because I cannot speak their home languages, which are Afrikaans and Otjiherero.

The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. I looked for patterns and I categorized them into themes. For ethical reasons, the two teachers and their schools were given pseudonyms.

1.6 RESEARCH SITE

The enquiry took place in the Otjozondjupa region in which a regional educational office was established in October 2004. This was an effort by the Ministry of Education in Namibia to bring the provision of education closer to the people through the decentralization process as explained in our policy document, (Namibia. MEC, 1993: 167). The document advocates the provision of quality education to all eligible learners in the region.

SCHOOLS IN OTJOZONDJUPA REGION

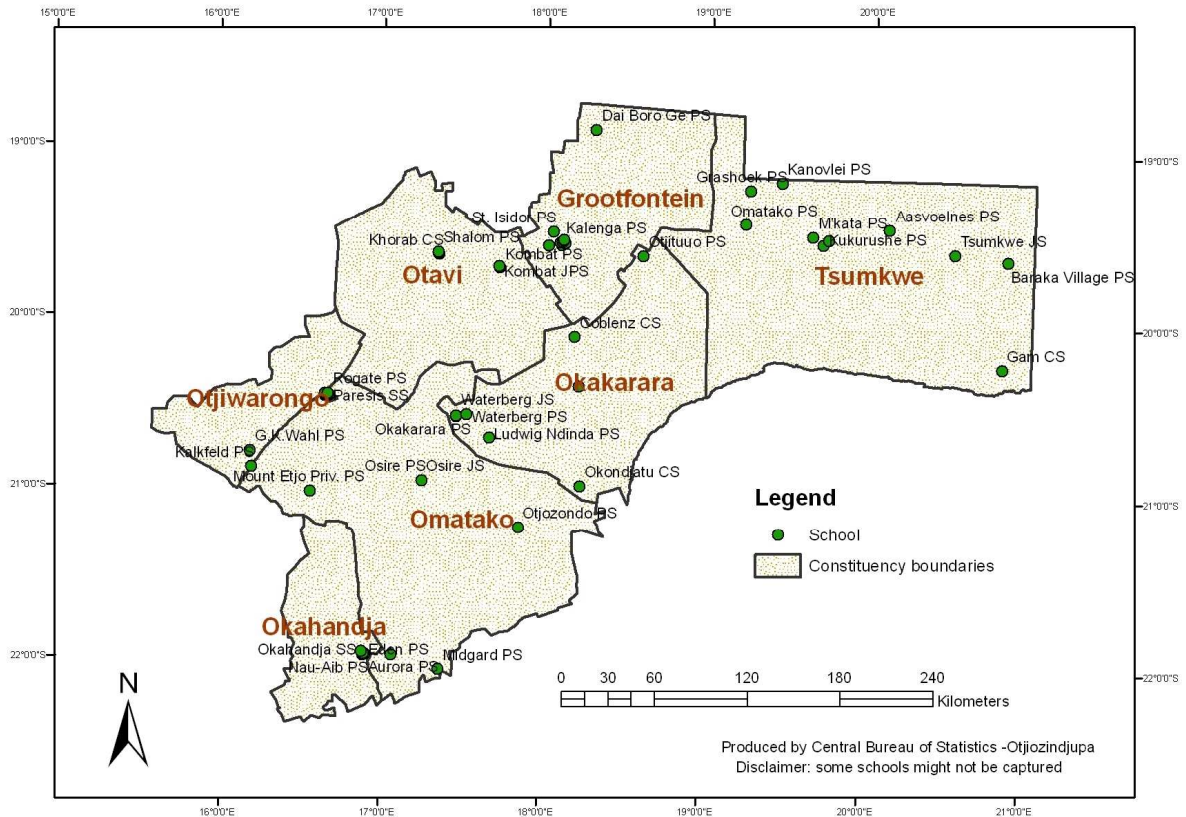


Figure 1

The population of Otjozondjupa region consists of 135 384 inhabitants with a growth rate of 2:8 per cent (National Population Census, 2001). The total area is 105 185 square kilometers with a density of 1.3 person per sq.km. There are 61 schools in the region; 8 are Senior Secondary Schools, 7 are Combined Schools (Grades 1-10) and 47 are Primary Schools. According to the 15th February School Day Statistics (2006), Otjozondjupa recorded 31 646 learners with 1007 teachers in the region. This number of learners can change from time to time due to transfers and dropouts. The literacy rate recorded after 15 years of independence in the region is 67% (National Population Census, 2001).

1.7 OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

This chapter states the context of this research and what triggered my interest in conducting the study. It attempts to explain the rationale for the study and it outlines the goals of the study.

Chapter Two provides the theoretical framework for the study. It gives an overview of the literature that covers:

- The Namibian language policy which influences the challenges of teaching reading in English in Grade 4;
- Approaches or methods used when teaching reading in Namibian classrooms;
- Theories on teaching reading; and
- The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching reading.

Chapter Three is concerned with the research methodology underpinning this study. This study is conducted in the interpretive paradigm and it aims to interpret and understand how teachers teach reading in Grade 4. The case study was selected as my method because it is a single unit "bounded system" (Smith, 1978 as cited in Merriam 2001: 27), which interprets the teaching of reading focusing on the strategies used to teach reading through the medium of English in Grade 4.

In Chapter Four I present the main findings on how the teachers' past experiences shape their beliefs about teaching reading, as well as other themes that emerged from the data that I analyzed, for example, teaching strategies and the training the teachers themselves received in teaching reading. The two teachers' voices have been used throughout the chapter.

In Chapter Five I discuss and interpret my findings regarding the teaching of reading in Grade 4 Namibian classrooms in the light of what the literature says about teaching reading and what other studies have found.

Chapter six gives a summary of my main findings regarding the experiences and strategies used by teachers in teaching reading. I further discuss the lessons learnt and I also make some recommendations for further research in the area of literacy. Finally I highlight the limitations of the research.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the introduction to the study with regard to its context, aims and research questions. In the next chapter I will review literature related to the topic under investigation looking at the background and challenges of the Namibian language policy with regard to teaching reading in a second languages in two Grade 4 classrooms in Namibia.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As stated in the previous chapter, the aim of this study is to explore teachers' beliefs about the teaching of reading and to examine how their beliefs influence their practice in the classroom.

I begin by discussing the language policy which affects decisions about the development of children's reading from Grade 1 onwards. Children need to develop a strong reading skill in their second language because in Grade 4 they are expected to make the transition to learning through the medium of English; their textbooks are in English therefore competent reading skills in this language are very important. In order to understand the language policy better, one has to look at its background, intentions and goals; it is the language policy that determines the language in which learners in Grade 4 are taught.

From this point I proceed to look at theories of teaching reading. Theories are notions arising out of research, which must also be put to the test. In this study exploration of the theories will help navigate the broader understanding of teaching reading in Grade 4. This includes theory related to teaching reading in a second language, what is involved when learning how to read and different stages of reading. Different approaches used when teaching reading are also considered.

A discussion of the Namibian curriculum and how teachers are trained in teaching reading in Namibia forms section three of this review. I draw on research that has been conducted on the teaching of reading in Namibia to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and its implementation. For comparative purposes I report on research carried out internationally and how well its findings correspond with what is happening in Namibia.

2.2 EDUCATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY IN NAMIBIA

Keeping in mind my research questions as mentioned in chapter 1, I now discuss the background, intentions, goals and problems in implementing the language policy in Namibia.

The language policy in Namibia under the South African regime was influenced by the apartheid ideology. The implementation of the language policy allowed “non-whites to start their education in the Lower Primary phase in their mother tongue” while Afrikaans was taught as a subject (Namibian Educational Research Association [NERA], 2000: 3-4). NERA (2000) states that after the first four years of education in the mother tongue in the apartheid era, the medium of instruction became Afrikaans for the remainder of the primary school grades, while English was relegated to a rather insignificant role in formal domains (Wolfaardt, Danek & Adamson, 2001).

However, after independence Angula (as cited in Zeichner and Dahlstrom, 1993: 21) contends that it was vital for Namibia to address the urgency of choosing English as an official language from the existing local languages. Angula was advocating for English to be chosen as the official language replacing Afrikaans in schools. The fruits of this advocacy can be seen in a Namibia. MEC (1993) policy document, which translates the Namibian philosophy on education into concrete and implementable government policy which states as follows:

- For pedagogical reasons it is ideal for children to study through their own language during the early years of schooling when basic skills of reading, writing and concept formulation are developed.
- Proficiency in the official language (English) at the end of the 7-year primary cycle should be sufficient to enable all children to be effective participants in society or to continue their education.

Following this line of thinking, English was adopted as the official language in Namibian schools from Grade 4 onwards. The reason for this adoption was explained as follows:

- To create unity and alleviate educational disadvantages among Namibians.
- To minimize any divisive tendencies and practices in the country.
- To create conditions conducive to national unity in the realm of politics, economics, religion, culture, race and language (Namibia. MEC, 1993: 55).

In addition, NERA (2000: 5) explains the privileged position of English as an official language by stating:

Although Namibia is a multilingual and multicultural country with different local languages, English enjoys a privileged position throughout the Republic, although the number of its mother tongue speakers is very low. For quantitative reasons English would qualify as a minority language, while in terms of its dominant role in official and formal domains no other language is equal to English.

From this argument and for reasons of official communication, English qualifies as an official language. Thus, looking at how the language policy was formulated and developed and the reasons for this, it is evident that the adoption of English as a medium of instruction was really a matter of compromise (Namibia. MEC, 1993). Indeed, Kallaway (as cited in Zeichner and Dahlstrom, 1999: 10) contends that policy formulation and change is ultimately a political process characterized by competing interests and compromises. I now explore the intentions and goals of the language policy.

2.2.1 The intentions and goals of the language policy

The adoption of English as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards resulted in Afrikaans, the language of the elite, which benefited the minority at the expense of the majority of Namibians, being replaced. The goals of the language policy are explained in the Namibian Language Policy document - discussion paper (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, [MBESC], 2003: 3) as follows:

- The seven-year primary education cycle should enable learners to acquire reasonable competence in English, the official language, and be prepared for English as medium of instruction throughout the secondary cycle.
- Education should promote the language and cultural identity of learners through the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in Grades 1-3 and the teaching of mother tongue throughout formal education.
- Grade 4 is a transitional year in which the mother tongue plays a supportive role in teaching. The mother tongue should be taught as a subject.

Swarts (as cited in Legere, 1996:19; Namibia. MBESC, 1996 and MBESC, 2005) emphasizes that the goals of the language policy, especially in the Lower Primary phase (Grades 1-3), are to teach in mother tongue as the medium of instruction and English as a subject. Namibia. MBESC (2005: 49) states:

The purpose of English as a second language in Grades 1-3 is to prepare for transition to English as a medium of instruction in Grade 4 and the purpose of English as a second language in Grade 4 is to provide a careful transition from teaching/learning in the home language to teaching/learning through the medium of English.

The goals of the language policy seem to suggest that Lower Primary teachers were expected to be proficient and confident enough to use English as a medium of instruction as from Grade 4. However this is not the case in Namibia as most of the teachers were not sufficiently competent to teach English from Grade 4 onwards (NERA, 2000).

2.2.2 Problems in implementing the language policy in Namibia

Many teachers before independence were used to speaking and teaching in Afrikaans. After independence, they switched over to English. Wolfraadt et al. (2001) argue that this switch over was a stressful move and certainly affected the entire education system in the country. This view is supported by Legere (1996) who contends that this change led to serious problems in formal education and in other domains where people felt

marginalized and second class citizens because they were not competent in the official language.

Trewby (as cited in Wolfaardt et al., 2001: 28) provides reasons why the switch-over to English has been so difficult:

- Firstly, the structure of English is very different from the structure of any of the Namibian languages (e.g. Khoikhoigowab, the San Bantu languages) and is therefore difficult to learn.
- Secondly, very little English is used in most communities in Namibia; therefore learners are not exposed to English except in the classroom.
- Lastly, the sound system of English and its realization in print is more complex than the system of the Namibian languages.

These points explicate why the switch to English medium at independence proved to be a major test for many of the country's teachers, whose English proficiency was insufficient to enable them to cope with teaching in a new language (NERA, 2000).

Many teachers were faced with the situation where “contact with and exposure to English in any form was limited both for themselves and their learners, thus restricting English to the unreal classroom environment” (Bradley as cited in NERA, 2000: 46). The same concern was expressed in the research on English Language Proficiency of Namibian teachers (Namibia. MBESC, 2000: 7):

At independence in 1990 came the implementation of the decision to use English as the official medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards, with little time for preparation, almost all of Namibia's teachers had to adjust to teaching in and through English a language in which they had, and in many cases still have a low level of proficiency.

These facts make it justifiable to argue that the teaching of reading in a second language in Grade 4 might be hampered by the fact that teachers are not well prepared to do so in English.

2.3 DIFFERENT THEORIES OF READING

The teaching of reading is underpinned by different reading theories formulated by different researchers and scholars. In order to have a broader understanding of the teaching of reading, I now explore different theories of reading.

2.3.1 Teaching reading in a second language: The role of the home language

In this section I start by looking at how mother tongue language development forms the basis for learning to read in a second language. On this note, Webb (1999: 3) contends that it is the learners' first language that provides a rich cognitive preparation for second language learning. He further argues that it is the skills acquired in the first language that provide for an easy transition to the second language medium.

This view is supported by Cummins (as cited in Hudson et al., 2001: 121), who describes the relationship between people's first language and second language. He contends that language learners have a Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) that supports second language learning by transferring skills from the first to the second language.

Cummins's (1979) linguistic theory highlights two important categories of language competency for learning. Firstly, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), which is everyday language and is context embedded. Secondly, there is the Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). This is defined as the basis for a child to cope with the academic demands placed upon him/her in various subjects. CALP is said to be a higher-level language skill required for literacy and cognitively demanding content, for example, reading about an unfamiliar subject (Cummins 1991 as cited in Rasana, 2002: 10). Cummins theorizes that CALP developed in the first language and transferred to the second helps support second language literacy acquisition. He further argues that if children do not develop a certain level of CALP in their first language, the benefit will not be transferred to the second language. Therefore, teaching children to read in their first language helps them to learn to read in their second language (Rasana, 2002).

This point is driven home by Apple and Muysken (1990: 105) who claim that children can reach high levels of competence in their second language if their first language is developed.

A good example is provided by Williams (1998: 27), who describes the failure of the “straight for English” approach in Zambia. His research showed that children in their third year of school barely read because they have had to learn to do so through a second language (English). His comparative research focused on Malawi, where children learn to read in Chichewa, which is the same language as Nyanja spoken in Zambia. The situation in Malawi is different from Zambia in that children begin their formal education in Chichewa and initially become literate in this language. The results showed that the Malawian children were able to read better in their home language than the Zambian children, who had learned to read in English. When it came to reading in English the Malawian children did slightly better than the Zambian children, though the difference was not statistically significant. Overall, therefore, the results were better for the Malawian children.

A similar theory of reading is advanced by Jackson (2003: 12), drawing on Vygotsky’s notion of spontaneous and scientific concepts. According to Vygotsky (1986) spontaneous concepts are concepts learnt from one’s home environment whereas scientific concepts are concepts learnt from school. Jackson (2003: 12) contends that spontaneous concepts are learned unconsciously through everyday experiences using basic interpersonal communication skills, whilst scientific concepts are schooled concepts, taught or mediated through cognitive academic language. Unfortunately for the Namibian child, the ground for spontaneous learning of a second language is bare because the experiences are literally absent. As indicated earlier, teachers are ill prepared to teach in English as a medium of instruction. In this respect, it is very difficult for the learners on the receiving end to acquire the intended language skills. In essence therefore, when teaching reading in the second language, one has to look at the totality of what is involved when learning to read.

2.3.2 What is involved when learning how to read?

Namibian children learn to read formally in their home language in Grade 1. The intention of the language policy and the curriculum is that over the first 3 years of their schooling they should develop a strong literacy foundation in their home language. In principle, this should be possible. After 3 years children should be reading (and writing) fluently in their home language. However, this does not happen in practice in Namibia. By the end of Grade 3, many children have a low level of literacy even in their home language (Van Graan & Imene, 2000).

From Grade 1 onwards, Namibian children learn English as a second language and they develop reading skills in that language. The idea is that they learn to read in their home language first, but they develop reading skills in English side by side with their home language reading skills. Unfortunately, children do not have strong literacy skills in their home language to build on. This, combined with the fact that their oral skills in English are not strong, makes it difficult to transfer their reading skills from their home language (such as they are) to English. Consequently, when children enter Grade 4 they cannot read well in either their home language or English. This presents a serious problem for teachers because children are expected to make the transfer to English as a medium of instruction in Grade 4 – they are expected to read textbooks in English and to be able to write in English; they will be assessed in all their subjects through the medium of English.

As a result, learning to read in Grade 4 in Namibia is difficult and learners struggle to learn how to read for some time. Chall (1984), writing about the American context, argues that in the fourth grade there is a slump in children's reading. She further contends that Grade 4 is considered as a critical point because it is in the fourth grade that linguistic, cognitive and conceptual demands of reading increase dramatically, and there is a heavier use of textbooks. In Namibia children begin to experience reading difficulties because the fourth grade is a transitional grade in the Lower Primary phase.

In order to understand the problems Namibian children are facing, I now discuss the stages of reading development using Rees's (1997) continuum which shows the indicators and level of competence from Grade 1-4.

The international level of competence which learners in Grade 4 should be achieving is between transitional and independent reading (Rees, 1997). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1998) describes the characteristics of transitional reading that children should be achieving. They should:

- Begin to read orally with increasing fluency and expression.
- Identify an increasing number of words by sight.
- Retell and discuss own interpretation of texts.

The characteristics of independent reading according to NAEYC (1998) are that children should:

- Continue to extend and refine their reading.
- Read fluently and enjoy reading.
- Use a range of strategies when drawing meaning from the text.

In addition, Krashen (1993) contends that independent reading is the reading learners choose to do on their own. Krashen further states that developing independent reading requires learners to select good books which they can read themselves. In other words, independent reading promotes voluntary reading.

Based on the characteristics and views above, the table below shows the indicators for different levels of reading competence from Grade 1-4 and how teachers can teach learners to read from one grade to the next.

2.3.2.1 Indicators for reading developmental continuum (Rees, 1997)

Levels of Reading Competence Proficiency	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
	Emergent Reading	Experimental Reading	Transitional Reading	Independent Reading
	-Displays reading-like behavior e.g. -holding the book the right way -turning the pages appropriately -looking at words and pictures. -using pictures to construct ideas	-Realizes that print contains a constant message. -Is focused on expressing the meaning of a story. -Uses a small range of familiar text forms -Uses a combination of invented and conventional spelling - Matches some spoken words with written words	-Shows an ability to construct meaning by integrating knowledge of: text structure -Can retell and discuss own interpretation of texts read or viewed with others -recognizes that characters can be stereotyped in a text.	Is becoming efficient in using most of the following strategies for constructing meaning: -self-corrects when reading. -Re-reads to clarify meaning -reading is fluent and automatic. -has an increasing bank of sight words.

a) ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

b) ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

Set (a) of arrows indicate: that learners can move from emergent reading onwards to independent reading.

Set (b) of the arrows indicate that: Learners can start reading from either emergent reading level or experimental depending on their cognitive level. This scenario can also be experienced by learners in Grade 2, 3 and 4. Rees (1997) explains this as indicators

for a reading development continuum. The key question here is where Namibian Grade 4 learners fall in this reading developmental continuum. This necessitates further research.

In Namibia the English Second Language Syllabus (2005: 58) indicates that learners in Grade 4 should:

- Begin to read fluently.
- Use books and printed materials to find information.
- Find basic information from factual text.

With reference to these statements, Namibian children are also expected to be independent readers at Grade 4 level, whereby they can find information for themselves from literature. But the unfortunate situation is that learners are not at this level in most of the schools in Namibia (SACMEQ report, 2004: 46). The reason for this is that most of the learners in Namibia, as mentioned earlier, cannot read well either in their mother tongue or in English.

According to the Grade 4 English syllabus (2005), learners should have an active vocabulary within the range of 2000 words in their second as well as in their first languages. They should extend their vocabulary, list new words from different subjects, practice difficult spelling and new frequency words (MBESC, 2005). They should also have a bank of sight words accumulated from Grades 1-3 in order to read fluently in Grade 4.

Searfoss and Readence (1994: 119) describe fluency as being able to move with ease through the wide variety of materials children encounter both in school and in non-school activities. They further contend that fluent reading is intimately related to the ability to comprehend an author's message. They claim that when children possess a large stock of words to draw on, comprehension becomes much easier. Stanovich (1986; 1993 as cited in Murray, 2006) contends that automaticity in reading is important in comprehension and fluency, because if a reader does not recognize words quickly enough meaning will

be lost. Chall 1984 contends that children's reading expression, fluency and comprehension generally improve when they read familiar texts. She further contends that one of the hallmarks of reading is fluent, accurate word identification.

Savage (1994) agrees that, for children around the world, word knowledge is an important factor for reading comprehension. "The more words children know, the easier it is for them to understand what they read" (Savage, 1994: 89). This point is supported by Chatry-Komarek (2003:115) that effective teachers make sure that children know the meaning of familiar words well, and that they learn new ones. She contends that a good combination of the two (knowing familiar words and learning new ones) enhances their reading comprehension. This means that learners have attained a large amount of vocabulary words and therefore are able to read fluently.

Baldwin (as cited in Searfoss and Readence, (1994:184) points out that children should possess vocabulary as owning words. The argument here according to Searfoss and Readence is that owning of words means that children feel comfortable with them and use them with facility in their daily language activities. Baldwin further contends that as children expand the stock of words they own, they increase the opportunity to broaden their experiences in reading.

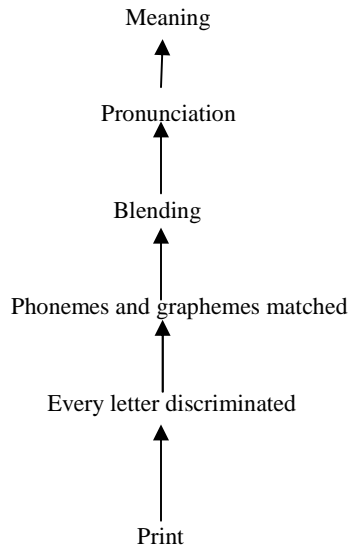
In the next section, I explore models of reading and how each model relates to the approaches for teaching reading in Grade 4.

2.4 MODELS OF READING

Research shows that reading is linked with making meaning from printed words. The following models represent different views on how reading can take place (Wray & Medwell, 1991).

2.4.1 Bottom-up model

Wray and Medwell (1991: 97) indicate that reading can be seen as a ‘bottom up’ process which begins from the perceptual recognition and decoding of letters up to the level of the sentence, paragraph, page and finally the complete text. They further refer to this model as an ‘outside-in model’ since the model makes the ‘assumption that reading is a process which begins outside the reader’ whose task is to transfer into his or her consciousness the meaning represented by the writer as graphic symbols. The following is a graphical representation of this model according to Wray & Medwell (1991: 97):

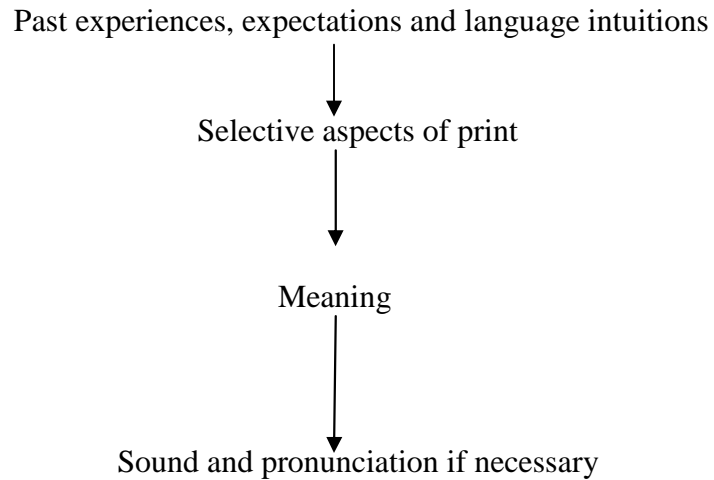


The above model suggests that meaning is obtained in a step by step fashion going from a letter to meaning as a sequence (Wray & Medwell, 1991: 97). The phonic method is based on this model, the perception being that children should master sound-spelling relationships before they make meaning out of print.

2.4.2 Top-down model

This model conceptualizes the reading process as starting in the mind of the reader (Wray & Medwell, 1991: 98). In other words, the model starts with the prior knowledge of a learner. This model has been referred to as an ‘inside-out model’. It assumes that the

most important “feature of reading is what is brought to the text from within the reader’s mind” (Wray & Medwell, 1991: 98). The following graphic diagram represents the top-down model:

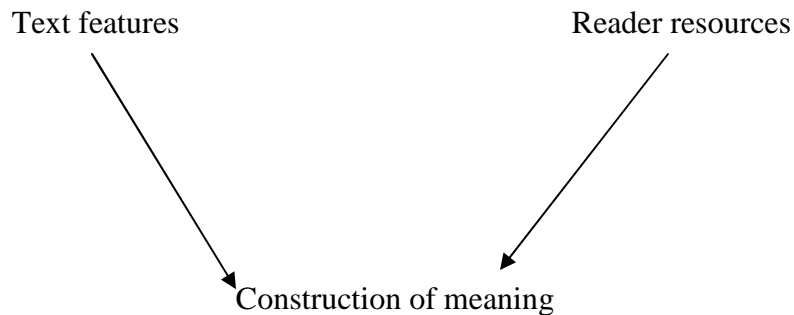


This model underpins the whole language approach to reading. The strength of this model is the belief that it considers learning to read as a holistic and unitary process as explored by Chatry-Komarek (2003: 70).

2.4.3 Interactive model

According to Wray and Medwell (1991: 100) this model is a combination of the ‘bottom up’ and ‘top down’ models of reading. The model claims that reading is both a perceptual and a cognitive process in which the reader uses both previous experiences and the ‘code’ features of the text to create meaning.

The following is a graphical representation of this model:



An approach such as the language experience approach is underpinned by an interactive view of reading. Its starting point is developed from the personal experiences of the learner and offers many opportunities for meaningful reading and writing activities. Wray and Medwell (1991) contend that models of reading processes are useful to teachers in that they give guidelines as to what methods are best employed in the teaching of reading.

The following section discusses the approaches and methods used for teaching reading in Grade 4 in Namibia.

2. 5 APPROACHES / METHODS OF TEACHING READING IN GRADE 4

There are several strategies and methods used in teaching reading in Grade 4 in Namibian classrooms. Some of these strategies and methods are stipulated in the language syllabus.

2.5.1 The Whole Language Approach

Chatry-Komarek (2003: 70) contends that the whole language approach aims at a progressive, systematic acquisition of reading and writing skills. She further argues that it has its roots in the conviction that language can be learnt through the mastery of different, easily identified skills thus making it learner-centered. She also contends that the teacher fosters the language skills by tailoring them to the learners' needs. Chatry-Komarek

claims that this approach puts emphasis on children's' cognitive development and it considers learning to read as a holistic, unitary process.

The whole language approach is about "constructing knowledge, which emphasizes knowing and developing the child's reading processes" (Chatry-Komarek, 2003: 71). She also contends that the process is based on making meaning from the children's literature which they read. This view is supported by Flanagan (1995), who contends that reading is based on information that comes to the eye from the brain rather than information that comes to the eye from the printed page. Flanagan further contends that reading is a process of predicting meaning and sampling the print to confirm that prediction.

The central criticism of the whole language approach is well captured in the following quotation by Cope and Kalantzis, (1993: 4):

... it should be exposed as culture bound, not open ... Its pedagogy of immersion naturally favours children whose voice is closest to the literate culture of power in industrial society.

Most Namibian children do not share this 'culture of power'; they come from homes with a paucity of literature and they are therefore not exposed to print materials like story books, newspapers or magazines, exposure to which help learners to learn how to read. Their parents are economically disadvantaged and often cannot afford to buy reading books for them to read (SACMEQ report, 2004).

Similarly, Flanagan (1995) talks about the constraints that undermine the immersion assumption of the whole language approach that, to expect children to learn to read independently in Grade 4 without a range of books on which to practice right from the first day of school is like asking someone to learn to ride a bicycle by reading it (Flanagan, 1995: 42).

2.5.2 The Phonic Method

The use of phonics in Grade 4 is meant as an aid to English pronunciation should learners have problems with words. However, it is worth mentioning here that phonics is still used extensively as a reading strategy for decoding elementary text in Grade 4 in some of the schools in Namibia (Imene & Van Graan, 1998).

Searfoss and Readence (1994: 221) define phonics as a way of teaching children the relationship between phonemes and graphemes (i.e. sounds and symbols) to help them sound out words.

Looking at the above definition of phonics, it is clear that learners in Grade 4 should have dealt with the sounds already in Grade 1. Searfoss and Readence (1994) argue that relying too much on phonics creates an imbalance and results in inefficient decoding strategies. The English Second Language Syllabus (2005) requires that learners in Grade 4 read independently with fluency.

Chatry-Komarek (1996) also argues that in many African countries phonics instruction has been misused for teaching reading in a second language. She further contends that phonics is often associated with lists of words both unknown and used out of context. In such cases Chatry-Komarek (2003: 59) argues that phonics distorts the process of reading because emphasis is put on learning the sound/letter relationships at the cost of understanding words.

A number of reading experts, linguists and other researchers such as Adams, (1990); Eldridge, Quinn & Butterfield, (1990); and Stahl, (1992), agree that there is value in teaching children sounds and symbols as part of beginning reading instruction, but as time goes on and children become competent decoders the emphasis needs to shift to fluency. By the time children are in Grade 4, phonics should not play a prominent role.

2.5.3 The Look and Say or Whole Word Method

Kritzing (1990: 118) contends that in the Look and Say method learners are taught to recognize whole words or sentences rather than individual sounds. Learners look at a word which the teacher reads and in turn repeat the word.

When using this method, Kritzing (1990: 119) argues that teachers can also write individual words on flashcards and learners can create different sentences again and again. Wray and Medwell (1991) also agree with Kritzing that the teacher can use word cards first to learn individual words and then lay the cards together to form a sentence. In Grade 4 teachers write words from a passage either on the chalkboard or on the flash cards for learners to read or repeat after the teacher and give the meaning of the words.

Stahl (1992) argues that the Look and Say method forces learners to learn through rote memorization. Kritzing (1990: 118) also argues that children get no help in deciphering new and strange words and have to rely on their memory. He contends that this method leads to guesswork, parrot-like repetition, picture-reading and faulty recognition of words.

2.5.4 The Language Experience Approach

McCormick (1994: 1) contends that the language experience approach is an approach to reading instruction based on activities and stories developed from personal experiences of the learner. He further contends that the stories about personal experiences are written down by the teacher and read together until the learners associate the written form of the word with the spoken.

McCormick (1994: 2) also contends that this approach is learner-centered and it demonstrates that the learners' thoughts and language are valued. The method brings together writing, reading and language. In addition, McCormick further argues that the language experience approach supports children's concept development and vocabulary

growth while offering many opportunities for meaningful reading and writing activities. Another benefit of this approach as McCormick puts it, is the development of shared experiences that extends children's knowledge of the world around them while building a sense of classroom community.

2.6 TECHNIQUES/ STRATEGIES OF TEACHING READING

Grade 4 teachers use different techniques and strategies in teaching reading. The following section explores techniques and strategies used by the teachers in Namibia.

2.6.1 Reading Aloud

There are many teachers who are using reading aloud as a chief means of improving the spoken English of their learners (Kritzinger, 1990: 139). In this section I discuss children reading aloud individually and in groups. Chatry-Komarek (1996) contends that reading aloud is considered important by many teachers who use it as a reading technique.

In Grade 4, for example, children should read aloud individually and in groups. The value of reading aloud individually according to Kritzinger (1990:140) is that:

- It gives learners exercise in paying close attention and in reading with concentration.
- It tells the teacher where the main reading difficulties lie and which reading aspects should be reinforced.
- It helps the teacher to discuss with the reader in order to see if he/she understands what he/she is reading.
- It helps the teacher to identify a weak reader.

Kritzinger (1990: 140) also looks at the value of reading aloud in groups as follows:

- Learners are less self-conscious in their groups and reading in groups encourages competition.
- Learners learn to co-operate and a sense of responsibility is engendered.
- The teacher can move about easily to help weak learners. He/she can even manage a group of weak learners.
- When reading in groups learners correct one another much more effectively than the teacher can.

Based on the above views Chatry-Komarek (2003: 130) claims that reading aloud is usually carried out as an after reading activity and when children become familiar with the text. She also argues that reading aloud can become quite frightening for those who are asked to read and boring for those who are listening. If children are not given time and opportunity to work out new words and to correct their miscues, reading aloud can also be counter-productive, Chatry-Komarek (2003: 131).

Kritzinger (1990: 139) also argues that the disadvantages of reading aloud are that:

- It slows down the reading pace instead of speeding it up.
- A few learners only are involved in the exercise, while the rest of the class is bored and passive.
- The interruptions and corrections embarrass the readers.
- Learners often practice at random, as there is no preparation. No one knows when a mistake is going to occur, in pronunciation, stress, intonation and phrasing etc.

Kritzinger (1990) contends that although reading aloud has some disadvantages it does not mean it cannot be used. The benefit of this method according to Kritzinger is that it helps learners to assist each other during the reading exercise.

2.6.2 Skimming and scanning

According to MBESC (2005: 59), learners in Grade 4 are required to skim and scan through the text when reading. Grellet (1991) contends that skimming and scanning are specific reading techniques necessary for quick and efficient reading.

According to Grellet, when skimming, we go through the reading text quickly in order to get the gist of it, to know how the text is organized, or to get an idea of the tone or the intention of the writer. She also argues that when scanning, we try to locate specific information and often we do not follow the linearity of the passage to do so. We simply let “our eyes wander over the text until we find what we are looking for, whether it is a name, a date or a specific piece of information” (Grellet, 1991: 57).

In the next section, I explore the notion of the revised curriculum on the teaching of reading in Grade 4.

2.7 CURRICULUM FOR TEACHING READING: GRADE 4

2.7.1 Background information

Ongoing research by the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) revealed that the present curriculum for the Lower Primary phase needed upgrading to improve the quality of education for all in Grades 1 – 4 (Namibia, MBESC, Teachers Manual, 2005). The comprehensive reform process of the Lower Primary Curriculum started in 2000 with its implementation for Grade 1 and 2 in 2005 and Grade 3 and 4 in 2006. This new revised curriculum for Lower Primary (2005) focuses on:

- The attainment of literacy, numeracy and broad knowledge skills in the immediate environment of the learner.
- Providing quality education for all learners at lower primary level in line with the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) and Namibia

Vision 2030.

- Laying a solid foundation for learning throughout the formal education system. (Namibia. MBESC, Grades 1-4, 2005).

The practicality of this curriculum needs to be seen in the classroom. As it now stands, there are gaps that need to be addressed in terms of teacher training and the methodologies which teachers should use when teaching reading in Grade 4.

Namibia. MBESC, Pilot Curriculum Guidelines (1996) advocated that learners in Grade 4 read in both mother tongue and in English. It assumed that learners in Grade 4 could already read in their mother tongue, which would then help them to read English as a second language. The Guidelines however failed to explain to teachers what approaches to use in order to build on the mother tongue reading ability.

Although not much is said about the teaching of reading in the Pilot Curriculum, the syllabus advocates the following in Grade 4:

- The teaching of prepared and unprepared complex sentences from a variety of fictional and non-fictional texts.
- Ensuring that learners read in English as a second language well enough to continue learning through the same medium in the next phase.
- Teaching reading within a passive vocabulary of about 2000 and an active vocabulary of 1500 words.
- Using reading skills for relaxation, learning and collecting information from books and other materials (Namibia. MBESC, 2005).

In order to attain the above, learners have to achieve the following basic competencies by the end of Grade 4:

- Read factual and fictional texts in groups/pairs/individually.
- Recognize style and meaning.

- Skim texts.
- Find and extract information from textbooks and books from the library.
- Read frequently in the book corner/library for enjoyment.
- In groups, make own books with collections of stories, factual texts and own creative writing (Namibia. MBESC, 2005).

However, it is arguable that teachers may not know how to deliver the right content to learners according to these exact requirements. The reason for this might be firstly, the lack of relevant reading books for the learners. Secondly, teachers might select extracts from reading materials, for example newspapers, which are not at the level of the learners and thirdly, some teachers might not have the know-how on how to teach reading.

In addition, the Lower Primary Curriculum gives teachers and learners a compulsory baseline for work on reading and if learners cannot read in English as a medium of instruction in Grade 4, they are not promoted to the next grade (Namibia. MBESC, Progress Report for Grades 1-4; 2005).

The next section looks at the research conducted in Namibia on the teaching of reading.

2.8 NAMIBIAN RESEACH CONDUCTED ON THE TEACHING OF READING

The teaching of reading continues to remain a major topic of discussion in education in Namibia. As a result NIED was requested by the MBESC to carry out research investigating reading competencies among the learners in the Lower Primary phase in Namibia (Imene & Van Graan, 1998).

The results of the research showed that functional literacy is poorly developed, and that many learners are poor readers. There is also evidence that the teaching of literacy, particularly reading in Lower Primary in both the Namibian languages and English is inadequate in many schools (Van Graan & Imene, 2000).

Similarly, the curriculum panel members (2003), outcomes from SACMEQ (1995), and UNESCO (1998: 64) describe the level of learners in Grade 6 as being below that expected, with only 25,9 percent of learners reaching the minimum level of mastery in reading and a meagre 7,6 percent reaching the desired level. SACMEQ report, (2004) indicated that an inadequate foundation in literacy and numeracy at the Lower Primary level is a contributing factor to low achievement in the upper grades.

Teachers in Upper Primary assume that because learners come to them through the lower primary phase, they had the required reading skills. However, because of inadequate preparation in the Lower Primary phase, learners continue to have difficulties in reading throughout their formal education (Legere, Trewby, & Van Graan, 2000).

According to research conducted by Van Graan and Imene (2000: 7), classroom observation in Grade 4 reveals that learners do not speak much English in class. In addition, the research carried out by NIED revealed that although teachers can tell you that their learners read every day, much of what they consider reading is actually repeating words. Legere, Trewby and Van Graan, (2000: 17) contest that most reading is done as whole class or chorus reading. They further contend that a few actual readers lead the way, a group that is half a word behind parrots the actual readers, and then there is a group that is not even attempting to read or parrot. Steward (2005) agrees with the above researchers that in the absence of other reading activities, only a minority of the class actually gets practice on a regular basis.

2.8.1 International research on reading

The International Education Association (IEA) conducted a study in 35 countries around the world and in their report on the Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS, 2001); the association revealed that learners at grade 4 need to have acquired reading skills in terms of comprehension at the right level. PIRLS (2001) assessed two major reading purposes namely:

- Reading for literary experience which is associated with reading fiction; and
- Reading to acquire and use information which is associated with informative articles and instructional text (Mullis, Martins, Gonzalez & Kennedy, 2003).

The study showed that the number of books and reading materials found in children's homes and at school influenced their reading scores. The report revealed that children in England had greater access to books at home and at school than those in many other countries. PIRLS 2001 also reported that teachers use a great variety of printed materials in their teaching of reading. In the Namibian context, reading materials and books are not available in many children's homes. This has a negative impact on the reading abilities of Namibian children. The SACMEQ report (2004) which was carried in 15 African countries, of which Namibia was part, showed that Namibia had the lowest reading abilities among learners in the SADC region.

2.9 HOW ARE TEACHERS TRAINED TO TEACH READING IN GRADE 4 IN NAMIBIA?

There is no systematic research in the Namibian context on how teachers are trained to teach reading. In addition, the SACMEQ report (2004) revealed that there is no policy on the number or type of in-service courses that a teacher should attend within a prescribed period. The report further revealed that individual educational regions often initiate in-service courses depending on the identified needs of teachers in the region, with or without consultations with NIED. As a result some teachers in some regions may attend several in-service courses while other teachers from the same regions may not (SACMEQ report, 2004).

The SACMEQ report (2004: 79) revealed that when teachers return from these in-service training courses to their respective schools they are expected to practice what they were taught in the reading course. SACMEQ further states that these teachers who have had the benefit of training often fail to initiate these strategies, either because it is too much work or because of peer pressure from the other teachers who did not attend the course.

According to Van Graan and Imene (2000), most teachers in Namibia teach reading according to:

- The way they were trained in their Basic Education Teachers' Diploma (BETD).
- Through observation of other teachers as they teach reading in their classrooms.
- The way they were taught to read in the past both at home and at school.

Van Graan and Imene (2000) looked at the training of teachers in relation to reading approaches and practices observed in Lower Primary classrooms. They argue that BETD trained teachers demonstrate varying levels of awareness and application of reading.

According to Van Graan and Imene (2000), the reading approaches observed in the majority of the Lower Primary phase (Grade 4 included) classrooms are 'whole word', 'phonics' or a combination of the two. The other way teachers are trained in teaching reading is through the Basic Educational Support (BES 11), a project of an American organization targeting the six northern regions of Namibia. This project trains teachers by involving them in reading instruction with its Structure Instructional Materials (SIMS) that promote the teaching of phonics. Another project - Namibia Early Literacy and Language Project (NELLP also called Molteno) uses the Breakthrough to Literacy approach for Grade 4, also referred to as the Language Experience Approach (Van Graan & Imene, 2000).

Van Graan and Imene (2000) contend that Namibian teachers nowadays are trained through workshops conducted by NIED and by Advisory teachers on how to teach reading to children using reading corners located in their classrooms. They further contend that different reading activities are displayed by dividing learners into groups while the teacher is busy at the reading corner with another group to enable the teacher to give individual attention to learners.

In the next section I explore the role of the library to enhance reading skills in Grade 4.

2.10 THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY IN ENHANCING READING SKILLS

Rasana (2002) contends that one of the core functions of a library is the support of developing literacy competencies. Learners should get access to a library in order to develop a love of reading.

Libraries in Namibia are found mainly in the formerly white schools. This gives the learners in such schools entry into a culture of reading. In the rural schools, libraries are simply not there, with the result that learners in such schools lag behind with regard to reading (SACMEQ report, 2004). Karlsson (1996) puts the blame on the government that ruled before independence in both South Africa and in Namibia. She cites the huge disparity in budgetary allocation between different departments of education which gave greater favour to the formerly white schools rather than the formerly black schools.

Although there are libraries in some of the schools, most teachers and principals do not see the value and relevance of school libraries (Rasana, 2002). This has a negative impact on developing the required reading culture. Although Rasana is writing about the situation of libraries in South Africa, the SACMEQ report (2004: 96) reported that the situation is the same in Namibia as only a few libraries are found in Namibia.

Research conducted by Montagnes (2001) revealed that the majority of schools possessed no libraries. He contends that where some semblance of a school library existed, it was often no more than a few shelves of outdated and worn out materials. He argued that this damaged educational outcomes.

According to the findings in the SACMEQ report (2004), home libraries are rare due to the poor economic status of the parents in the rural areas of Namibia and the number of illiterate parents. They do not have resources to provide extra books for their children. For many children, the only books they have are at school. This situation hampers the

teaching and learning processes in schools, as libraries are essential to enhance the joy of reading (SACMEQ report, 2004).

2.11 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN TEACHING READING

The study of teachers' beliefs and practices forms part of the process of understanding how teachers conceptualize their work (Clark & Peterson, 1986). The study suggests that it is necessary to understand the beliefs and principles they operate from. In other words, teachers' beliefs about teaching reading represent a complex relationship between themselves and their classroom behaviours.

Eisenhart et al. (as cited in Farrell and Lin, 2005) argue that beliefs direct one's thoughts and behaviour. In addition Rueda and Garcia (1994) assert that teachers' beliefs and behaviours are difficult to examine as they are not observable. As a result teachers' beliefs can take many forms in practice (Kajinga, 2005). In discussing forms of teachers' beliefs Fang (1996) notes:

They can be embodied, among others, in the teacher's expectations of his/her students' performance or in the teacher's theories about a particular subject area's learning and teaching. Regardless of the forms they take, a teacher's beliefs or philosophy can affect teaching in one way or the other.

Therefore teachers' beliefs and practices do affect learners' progress. If the practices are not valuable, the learners do not benefit. If the teachers find it hard to discard old teaching beliefs and practices, learners are left to either cope or drop out (Pajares, 1992).

The knowledge and beliefs that lie behind teachers' practices is the way in which teachers understand the subject matter and the knowledge they develop from those beliefs that help them to foster children's learning (Pajares, 1992: 89). The literature suggests that teachers' beliefs are unlikely to be replaced unless they prove to be inadequate or unsatisfactory. This unlikely to happen unless those beliefs are challenged, either

externally or internally by the teacher him/herself and found to be impossible to be assimilated into their existing practice (Woollcot, 2002).

Research also suggests that teachers make sense of their professional world. The knowledge and beliefs they bring with them to the teaching of reading inform their everyday practice in the classroom situation (Berliner & Robert; 1996).

Teachers' beliefs and practices are influenced by the way they were taught in the past (Kajinga, 2005). Torres (2005: 17) contends:

What teachers believe and how they behave in the classroom are shaped by their personal experiences, their instruction, and formal knowledge.

Furthermore, teachers' beliefs and practices involve a high level of personal involvement (Borg, 2001). In other words, teachers use their experiences to project themselves in particular roles and to establish relationships within the classroom, so that children's interest is maintained and a productive working environment is developed.

2.12 CONCLUSION

The teaching of reading, particularly in Grade 4 classrooms, has become a challenge in Namibian schools. The focal point is that by the end of Grade 4 all learners are able to read, meaning that it is obligatory for all teachers in the Lower Primary phase to enable their learners to read. International studies in reading, for example one conducted by PIRLS (2001), argue that the fourth grade is a moment of reckoning in that learners should be able to read and subsequently improve from this point onwards.

The chapter has also looked at various methods/approaches and strategies related to teaching of reading in Namibia and internationally. Strickland (1994) argues that there are no teaching methods or approaches which are most effective for teaching children how to read; rather teachers need to know how best each method can be used to teach reading. The chapter also looked at teachers' beliefs that play a major role in the way

they teach in the classroom situation. Their early exposure, experiences, in-service training and the context in which they find themselves have a great influence on their practices.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As stated in previous chapters, the purpose of this study is to explore how teachers teach reading in Grade 4 of the Lower Primary phase. This exploration is an investigation geared towards answering my research questions regarding teachers' experiences and perceptions in teaching reading in Grade 4 Namibian classrooms.

This chapter gives an overview of the research methodology, methods and tools used in this research project. The first section of this chapter looks at my research design and discusses the research orientation in which my study is located. Secondly, I describe the approach and methods which shaped and informed my study. Finally, the third section reports on sampling, validity, ethics, data analysis and the limitations of the study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

- **THE APPROACH**

3.2.1 Interpretive paradigm

The methodology adopted in this research is interpretive, which gives me an opportunity to understand and give meaning to the topic of the research. Teachers and learners interact with each other, giving meaning to what they are doing and why they are doing it. This paradigm helps me to understand and interpret teachers' actions when teaching reading in Grade 4. The paradigm also shapes my study because I want to understand teachers' beliefs about teaching reading. The interpretive paradigm according to Jackson (2003) involves interpreting and understanding human action. Human action must be interpreted to give it meaning. In my case, I observed teachers' actions when teaching

reading and tried to understand what and how they taught reading through their actions rather than judging them. Through this observation, I was able to see and understand their actions when teaching reading in their classrooms. Subsequently, I explored the relationship between their beliefs and actions.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2003: 23) also contend that interpretive researchers begin with individuals and attempt to understand their interpretations of the world around them. They further claim that the interpretive paradigm works directly with experiences and understanding of the theories that emerge as more information becomes generated during the research process. In my case, my study is empirical in the sense that the research relies on collection of evidence about what was happening on the ground (in this case, in Grade 4 classrooms). Bassey (1999: 40) also sees interpretive research as a category of empirical research. He describes interpretive research as research which focuses on data collection. In the light of the above, I regard myself as an interpretivist who wants to interpret and give meaning to the data I collect on teaching reading in Grade 4. These are the attributes of a qualitative approach.

3.2.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research as Creswell (1994: 2) defines it, is “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of information, and conducted in a social setting”.

In other words qualitative research is concerned with the meaning of human behaviour and experiences, and of its social functions. This view is further advanced by Merriam (2001: 12) who defines qualitative research as “an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible.”

McMillan and Schumacher (1997) describe the characteristics of qualitative research as follows:

- Qualitative research is concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participant's perspective.
- Qualitative research believes that human actions are strongly influenced by the setting in which they occur.
- Qualitative research has great flexibility in both methods and the research process.

Based on these views, I consider the classroom as a social setting. A wealth of human behaviour is exhibited, which has social functions and it is the aim of the research to explore these functions. The point here is that this study strives to analyze the qualitative nature of teaching based on the teachers' experiences and beliefs. To capture this quality, the data has been collected in a natural setting, without pre-conceived ideas or biases being introduced as a result of methods used. Both the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative research method applied in this study have led me to focus my research by using a case study.

3.2.3 Case study

Case studies involve gaining an in-depth understanding of a situation and its meaning for those involved (Merriam, 2001). Case studies are appropriate in terms of collecting data during a given period. Case studies, however, have different definitions which may be confusing. For instance, Lincoln and Guba (1995: 360) claim that while "the literature is replete with references and with examples of case study reports, there seems to be little agreement about what a case study is".

Yin (2003: 5) defines a case study as an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." Stake (1995: 3) defines a case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to

understand its activity within important circumstances.” In other words the case study is a way of investigating an empirical topic by following a set of pre-specified procedures.

I used the case study method because I was dealing with a single case, looking at a specific grade and a specific number of participants. As a Subject Advisor who is directly involved with lower primary teachers, this study has helped me develop a rich description of how teachers’ manage the teaching of reading in Grade 4 Namibian classrooms.

The case study procedures used here are described in the following sections.

3.3 THE CONTEXT AND BOUNDARIES OF THE CASE

This study took place in two schools in the Otjiwarongo Circuit in the Otjozondjupa region. They are government schools situated within 4-5 kilometers of each other and the languages spoken in the area where the schools are located are Afrikaans, Otjiherero and Khoikhoigowab. The piloting of my research tools was done at one peri-urban school situated in the same circuit. The data was collected from the 13th of June to the 04th of July 2006.

3.4 SAMPLING

Maxwell (2005: 26) defines sampling as “decisions about where to conduct the research and whom to involve, an essential part of the research process.” He adds that sampling usually involves people and settings, events and processes.

To structure my study I used purposeful and convenience sampling. McMillan and Schumacher (1997: 434) define purposeful sampling as “a strategy to choose individuals likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest.”

Convenience sampling refers to the selection of a geographical area on the basis of being accessible.

My sample is structured by selecting two schools purposefully, one urban and the other peri-urban. In addition I selected these particular urban and peri-urban schools because they are within reach of my work place (convenience sampling). I chose two teachers teaching Grade 4 because I had worked with them when we were training the Grades 3-4 teachers on the new revised curriculum. They were my facilitators and they were more likely to provide me with the rich information that I needed. One of the teachers had more than twenty-two years teaching experience in the Lower Primary phase and eight years teaching Grade 4. The other teacher had eleven years teaching experience and five years teaching in Grade 4.

My intention was not to work with two female teachers only, but rather to work with one male and one female. However, the majority of teachers teaching Grade 4 are female and I was unable to identify a male teacher who could be part of my study. I used pseudonyms to protect the teachers' privacy and to maintain confidentiality of the name of the schools and teachers. The pseudonyms are Abby, who teaches at Kamiyo Primary School, and Cassy, who comes from Madala Primary School. I also used pseudonyms for any learners who were mentioned in the classroom observations.

3.5 ETHICS

It is essential to conduct qualitative research in an ethical manner. Stake (1995 as cited in Merriam, 2001: 101) maintains that "qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world." It is important for the researcher to be aware of the ethical considerations and dilemmas that they may encounter, because they are entering people's private lives when doing research. These typically include privacy, anonymity and confidentiality guaranteed by informed consent. In order to address the ethical issues, I wrote a letter to the Regional Director of Education asking permission to work with the teachers via respective Principals in the selected schools (see Appendix 1a). Without her permission or approval, it would have been difficult to gain access to the two schools. After permission was granted, I wrote letters to the two Principals asking for permission to allow me work with the teachers in their schools (see Appendix 1b). Lastly I contacted

the teachers themselves to seek their informed consent (see Appendix 1c-f). When finally permission was granted, I alerted the participants that all the information gathered would be treated with respect and confidentiality.

One of my external examiners drew my attention to the fact that the letter to the teachers did not state that they could withdraw at any stage nor did it indicate how their anonymity would be assured. This is noted as a shortcoming in the research methodology.

The fact that I am an Advisory teacher for the Lower Primary phase in the whole region and that my participants (teachers) knew me well, might have affected their normal daily practices and they might have acted unnaturally. To avoid this, I alerted my participants of their privacy. In order to demonstrate ethical commitment to my participants, I gave them the interview reports for them to review our discussions and state whether those discussions were accurate. The purpose here was to remain non-judgemental. Feedback of this kind enabled me to cement my relationship with the respondents in a more professional way. The respondents become more confident and ready to work with me.

3.6 TECHNIQUES AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

I used the following tools to collect data: interviews, classroom observation and document analysis. I selected these tools because they are directed by my research questions. I wanted to find out from my research participants how they teach and their beliefs and perceptions about teaching reading. I viewed my tools as guiding principles towards interpreting the information gathered. They would inform me of the interactive process of teachers and learners. The tools were further meant to bring out the qualitative nature of these interactions and help me comprehend the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the teaching process in Grade 4.

3.6.1 Pilot interview

Before I collected data, I piloted my research tools in order to test understanding of my interview questions. This gave me an indication as to whether I should use the same questions or adjust some of them. McLean (1994) contends that piloting involves testing to check the following:

- The clarity of the interview questions.
- Eliminating or minimizing ambiguity and difficulties in wording.
- Gaining feedback on the type of questions.

I gave a draft set of interview questions to one of the teachers at a nearby school, who was not part of my sample. This was done to assess whether my interview questions were clear and to see whether my tape-recorder was in a good condition. I selected this participant purposefully and conveniently because she met the needs of my study and she was within reach. I used semi-structured interview questions because my research question entails ‘How is reading taught in Grade 4 Namibian classrooms?’ This requires gaining access in the real classroom situation when the teacher is teaching. The questions were open-ended so that I could get in-depth and rich data on how teachers teach reading (see Appendix 2 for a copy of the pilot interview schedule). I promised the teacher that her identity would be anonymous. I transcribed and analyzed the transcript. This exercise revealed that:

- The data was relevant to my research questions.
- I should take notes when interviewing the participants to capture everything they say.
- The tape-recorder should be in a good condition and it should be switched on before the interviews.
- I should probe to get rich data.

The pilot interviews enabled me to learn how to listen, probe and gave me insight into what I could expect during the proper interview.

3.6.2 Interviews

O' Leary (2004: 27) defines interviews as “the interaction between the interviewer and a single interviewee.” He further says it is one-on-one interaction which allows the researcher to have control over the process and the interviewee to have the freedom to express his or her thoughts. Bell (1994: 101) also describes an interview as a conversation between the interviewer and the respondent with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondent. Cantrell (1993: 83) observed that interviews allow the collection of data in “the subjects’ own words thereby affording the researcher an opportunity to discover perceptions, interpretations and the meaning which they give to their actions.”

I interviewed two teachers. I used semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix 3). Cohen et al. (2000: 279) view the semi-structured interview as one in which the content and procedures are organized in advance. The sequence is determined by means of a schedule. I also prepared my interview questions in advance and studied them and started practicing how I was going to carry out the interview. After preparing the interview, I tested my voice on my own child and the pronunciation of words in order not to confuse the interviewee. I tape-recorded the interviews with the two teachers. I played the tape just to make sure everything was recorded. I also took notes during the interview sessions in case the tape-recorder did not function properly. After the interviews I transcribed them.

When conducting interviews, one needs to be wary of the fact that there are some problems that could be encountered. O'Leary (2004), for instance, notes that: participants can go off track by giving irrelevant answers, requiring the interviewer to redirect them to the questions asked. In addition:

- The tape-recorder may give problems during the interview.
- There may be nervousness at the beginning, because you are dealing with three things at the same time. Firstly, you are trying to listen to the interviewee; secondly, you are attempting to question, probe in ways that you will gather the best data; and lastly, you are trying to manage the process so that you know how much time has passed, and how much time is left.

In spite of these problems, the interview as a tool of research has several advantages. According to O’Leary (2004), interviews allow for greater depth, you can probe for clarity and respondents become more involved when responding to questions. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) contend that people are willing to open up more when talking than when writing. The disadvantage of interviews is that they are prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer and can distort what the respondents really mean (Cohen et al., 2000).

3.6.3 Classroom observations

Merriam (2001: 101) argues that observations are the major means of collecting data in qualitative research. She further says they offer a firsthand account of the situation under study and when combined with interviews and document analysis, allow for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated. McMillan and Schumacher (1997: 268) contend that observation is very different from interviews and questionnaires. They argue that the observation method relies on a researcher seeing, hearing and recording things which are happening in the classroom situation.

Cohen et al. (2000: 305) note that observation involves gathering live data from live situations and this is what I have done. I observed a total number of six reading lessons from two teachers in two different school settings. I used classroom observation because I wanted to see what teachers actually do in teaching reading in Grade 4. The other reason why I conducted classroom observation was to provide me with some knowledge of the context, specific incidents, behaviours that can be used as reference points for the

interviews and document analysis. I recorded all six lessons from the two teachers observed and I used stimulated recall if I was not clear about some of the issues in the lesson (Merriam, 2001).

The advantages of classroom observation are that:

- You actually see what the teacher is doing rather than what they say they do.
- You can re-play an audio or video cassette for a teacher to listen to how she was teaching and ask follow-up questions; this is what is known as stimulated recall (Merriam, 2001).

Disadvantages of classroom observations could be:

- The way in which the observer's own history, biases, interests, experiences and expectations can colour what you observe (Merriam, 2001).
- Teachers can face difficulties in positioning themselves when they are teaching.
- Transcribing from the tape-recorder is time consuming.

After the classroom observation, I also looked at documents as another source of data.

3.6.4 Document analysis

LeCompte and Preissle (1993: 216) define documents "as artifacts, symbolic materials such as writing and signs." They further say documents can tell the researchers about the inner meaning of everyday events and they may yield descriptions of rare and extraordinary events in human life. Merriam (2001: 11) and Cohen et al. (2000) argue that documents refer to more than paper; there is a hidden picture in the document that needs to be interpreted. They further say documents are pre-produced text that has not been generated by the researcher. The researcher's role becomes that of reviewing and interrogating relevant documents.

I used documents such as teachers' lesson plans, teaching aids, learners' work, a reader, curriculum documents and the syllabus. The reason for this was to examine the teachers' practices and to see what might be informing their practices. The other reason was to find out the level of competence at which the learners were operating in terms of the curriculum for lower primary. Although documents are a good source of data for numerous reasons, they have also some advantages and disadvantages. According to Merriam (2001: 128) the advantages are that:

- Documents are easily accessible, free and contain information that would take an investigator enormous time and effort to gather information.
- Documents may be the only means to study certain problems.
- Documentary data are a particularly good source for qualitative case studies because they can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated.
- Analysis of this data source lends contextual richness and helps to ground an inquiry in the milieu of the writer.

The disadvantage of document analysis is that it is difficult to determine their authenticity and accuracy, as this can contain some built-in biases that a researcher may not be aware of.

These tools helped me to validate my study as they were based on reality and were guided by research goals and questions.

3.7 VALIDITY

Cohen et al. (2000: 115) define "validity as an important key to effective research." They argue that validity addresses the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data; the extent of triangulation; and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher. McMillan and Schumacher (1997) maintain that validity refers to the degree to which the explanation of a phenomenon matches the realities of the world. Validity is bound to the question: can

someone believe my study? Threats to believing my study can come from many quarters, for example, the sample might be inadequate and questions might not be well formulated and structured. In order to minimize the threats to validity Cohen et al. (2000: 117) stipulate the following:

- Choosing an appropriate time scale.
- Selecting an appropriate methodology for answering research questions.
- Selecting appropriate instrumentation for gathering the type of data required.

In order to validate my findings, I asked my interviewees probing questions in order to get detailed responses. Yin (2003) argues that any findings are likely to be convincing and accurate if they are based on several different sources of information. Therefore I used more than one method (triangulation) in order to avoid threats to the validity of my study.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Merriam (2001: 145) contends that data analysis is the process of making sense of the data. According to her, this involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read. She further argues that data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation.

Patton (2002: 463) says “raw data in the form of field notes and verbatim transcripts constitute the undigested complexity of reality.” He further believes that simplifying and making sense out of complexity constitutes the challenge of content analysis and developing some manageable classification. A coding scheme is the first step of analysis.

Following on the advice of Merriam (2001) and Patton (2002), I went through a step by step process of reading through my interview transcripts, classroom observation

schedules and the documents. After reading all the transcripts, I started looking for similarities, comparisons and differences. I used colour coding to identify themes. After this step I grouped teachers' responses under each interview question. After grouping them, I was able to put them into categories, which then developed into themes. Some of these themes included the importance of reading in one's mother tongue, the dominance of rote learning and the availability of books in the homes and in school.

Classroom observations were analyzed differently from my interviews. I looked at how teachers teach reading in their classrooms and the strategies they were applying when teaching reading. I analyzed and interpreted their lessons through describing what they were teaching and the methodologies they used when teaching reading.

3.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As mentioned earlier, one of the potential limitations is that both my research participants were female. I had originally hoped to have a male and female to rule out gender bias. Also, because I am an Advisory teacher for the Lower Primary phase, the teachers may have behaved unnaturally in the interviews and observations. At times my impression was that one of the teachers modified her behaviour for this reason. In addition, the frequency of my visits to the two schools was curtailed by other pressing issues at office level.

The time frame available to conduct a half-thesis is also a limiting factor on the depth and scope of this kind of study.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology used, which is directed by my research questions within the framework of the interpretative paradigm. The data collecting methods, which were interviews, classroom observation and document analysis are discussed. Problems, issues and risks when using the research tools and the issues of

validity, ethics as well as sampling are also explored. In the next chapter I present and analyze the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present and make sense of my findings from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis. The purpose of my study was to explore Grade 4 teachers' beliefs about the teaching of reading and to examine how their beliefs influence their practice in the classroom. I identified the patterns from my raw data and categorized them into themes. The data is presented in words and in tables. Themes from my data were directed by my research questions as indicated in Chapter 1, which were as follows:

- What are teachers' beliefs about teaching reading?
- How do they perceive reading?
- How is reading taught in selected Grade 4 English classes?

The report of my findings is organized in terms of the following categories of analysis from my interview questions:

- The contextual analysis of the two schools and the background of the teachers in my study.
- Background experiences of how respondents (the two teachers) were taught to read in the past.
- Strategies which respondents recall their teachers using to teach reading in the past.
- Experiences and strategies used in teaching reading in Grade 4. (Descriptions of teachers' lessons).
- Teachers' training in teaching reading.

Each of these categories relates to how teachers perceive and teach reading in Grade 4.

4.2 THE CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE SCHOOLS AND BACKGROUND OF THE TEACHERS IN MY STUDY

The teachers interviewed and observed are currently teaching in Grade 4 at two different schools. The table below shows the background information of the schools and teachers.

Table 4.2.1 Profile of the schools and teachers

School	Teacher	Sex	Language of the teacher	Qualifications	Experience	Number of learners in Grade 4	Language in which reading is taught	School resources
Kamiyo PS Urban	Abby	F	Afrikaans	HED (specializing in Languages and Sciences Grade 1-7)	11	40	English Afrikaans	Library Computer-Lab Reading-Corner
Madala PS Peri-urban	Cassy	F	Otjiherero	ECP, BETD (specializing in Lower Primary Grade 1-4)	22	42	English Otjiherero and Khoikhoigowab	Mini-library

Key to acronyms

BETD – Basic Education Training Diploma

ECP – Education Certificate Primary

HED – Higher Education Diploma

PS – Primary School

Lab – Laboratory

The table above shows the profile of the two schools and the teachers that I worked with in my study. I used pseudonyms for the schools and teachers for the sake of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity. The first school is Kamiyo Primary School, which takes learners from Grades 1 to 7. It is an Afrikaans medium school, which was

exclusively for white learners in the apartheid era. After independence in 1990, English became the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards. It is well-resourced and has a well-stocked library and a computer laboratory. Abby teaches at this school. She is married with two children and has an Higher Education Diploma (HED) in Languages and Sciences from the University of the Orange Free State in South Africa. She has 11 years' teaching experience and has been teaching in Grade 4 for 5 years. She has 40 learners in her class and teaches reading almost every day.

The second school is Madala Primary School, situated in a formerly black location; it is a peri-urban school and it operates from Grades 1-7. The teacher teaching at this school is Cassy. She is a qualified teacher with an Education Certificate Primary (ECP) and she graduated in 2002 with a Basic Education Teachers' Diploma (BETD in-service) from the Windhoek College of Education. She has 22 years of experience in teaching the Lower Primary phase and started teaching Grade 4 eight years ago. She teaches reading in English, which is the medium of instruction, and in Otjiherero, which is taught as a subject. There are two classes for Grade 4 at this school; one is for English and the other for Khoikhoigowab. Cassy has 42 learners in her class. The school has a mini library with only a few old storybooks relevant for Grade 4 learners.

Looking at the profile of the schools and teachers, one sees that the class size is above the norm. Namibia. MEC, (1993), states that the norm in secondary schools is 1:30 whereas the norm in primary schools is 1:35. This norm does not apply in the two selected schools which poses the problem of how the teachers manage to give learners sufficient individual attention when teaching reading in their classes. The teachers expressed their view that it is difficult to ensure that every child is given sufficient time to learn to read.

As mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, the Language Policy document (2003) regards Grade 4 as a transitional grade because the medium of instruction changes from mother tongue to English. This switch-over portends the challenges teachers and children face as they try to understand the new instructional medium. This is a new experience for learners and

the level is slightly higher than what they have been used to in the lower grades; another challenge is that all their textbooks are in English.

In the next section, I examine the background experience of the two teachers with regard to how they were taught to read in the past. The purpose of this is to understand the experiences which formed them as readers and how this might have affected their approach to teaching reading.

4.3 BACKGROUND EXPERIENCES OF HOW THE RESPONDENTS (THE TWO TEACHERS) WERE TAUGHT TO READ IN THE PAST

From the interview questions and the interactions I had with the respondent teachers, a number of themes emerged with regard to the teachers' own experiences of learning how to read. Some of these themes had a bearing on their current practice:

- The importance of learning to read in one's mother tongue.
- The dominance of rote learning.
- The availability of books both at home and at school.
- Qualifications and effectiveness of the respondents' former reading teachers.

4.3.1 The importance of learning to read in one's mother tongue

Both teachers claimed they were able to read as instruction was in their mother tongue during their schooling. They both noted that learning in the mother tongue is important as it prepared them well on how to read in any other language.

When asked about the languages in which she was taught to read in the past, Abby responded: *"It is crucial to learn in the mother tongue before reading in any foreign language."* She even cited an example of her own that, *"I read a lot in Afrikaans than in any language and Afrikaans is my first language. When I was in Grade 4, I could read fluently on my own and this gave me an opportunity to learn how to read in English."*

She further said it was easy for her to read and she liked school because it was relevant to her own home situation as she understood the teacher very well. She went on to say that what her mother used to teach her at home was relevant to what she learnt at school. She compared this to the situation in her own class where, although she is teaching in an Afrikaans medium school from Grades 1-3 and English becomes the medium of instruction in Grade 4, learners come from different language groups, which makes it difficult for them to read because they are not taught in their mother tongue from Grades 1-3. She feels that it is preferable to teach learners in their mother tongue rather than in a second language. She added that although learners were coping in her class, it took time for them to read fluently in English and to understand what they were reading.

Cassy expressed similar views:

Learners should first read in their mother tongue in order to build on the second language. When I was in Grade 4, I was able to read and write a letter in Otjiherero. I answered comprehension questions from reading passages because I understood what I was reading quite well. It was even easier to remember words in mother tongue than in a second language... although I am Otjiherero speaking I can teach Afrikaans because I am used to speaking the language before and after independence than English. Sometimes it is difficult to pronounce some of the words in English and the other issue is learners are used to mother tongue from home and from Grades 1-3. The automatic switch to English in Grade 4 is a problem.

From the teachers' responses, it is evident that they believe the role of mother tongue is important in learning to read. They both believe that if learners can read in their mother tongue, then they can learn to read more easily in their second language; this was also evident in the lesson when learners in Cassy's class read words from the chalkboard. They tried to pronounce the English words drawing on the sound system of their mother tongue and therefore pronounced them incorrectly. This was also evident in the learners' books; when Cassy told learners to spell vocabulary words from the passage in their exercise books, most of them spelled the words using the phonology of their mother tongue.

As discussed in Chapter 2, prior to 1990 Afrikaans rather than English was the main medium of instruction in Namibian schools. Teaching through the medium of English is a relatively new phenomenon of only 16 years duration. Cassy, therefore, had to make an abrupt transition to teaching through the medium of English after she had become established in her teaching career. It is evident from her response quoted above, that she still feels more comfortable in Afrikaans than in English and sometimes has difficulties in pronouncing words in English herself.

4.3.2 The dominance of rote learning

Responding to a question on how she was taught to read in Grade 4, Abby's response was:

In the past where teacher-centered approach or rote learning was dominant, I was able to read. My teacher, if my memory serves me well, in Grade 4 used to teach us grammar e.g. substitution table where pronouns, verbs and nouns were grouped. We drilled forming sentences out of the table. I was able to identify a sentence in the present, past and future tense. We memorized text from the Bible, yet we knew how to read. I am happy with the way I was taught in the past and I could not be a teacher today if it could not be for rote learning.

Similarly, Cassy said:

After independence we adopted learner-centered education, which makes learners active and teachers passive. In the past untrained teachers, who only did the talking, taught me and I just listened, but yet I could read. We repeated and memorized rhymes and poems in mother tongue and Afrikaans without understanding, but I still emphasize I could read. This learner-centered education is giving much freedom to learners and that is why they do not concentrate. In my case I am still struggling with it. I put learners in groups to help each other when reading, but it takes time. When are they going to finish the stories in their reader if they read in groups? Over-crowdedness in our classes also makes it difficult to give individual attention to those learners who are struggling to read and in groups it is even worse as learners will be just opening their mouth without reading and following in their readers.

From their responses, both teachers support rote learning and they both believe that the practice of rote learning enabled them to read fluently both in Grade 4 in mother tongue and in Cassy's case also in her second language, Afrikaans. Observation in Cassy's lesson revealed that she expected learners to repeat vowel sounds preceded by different consonants, for example, mba, mbe, mbi, mbo, mbu and tja, tje, tji, tjo, tju in Otjiherero. She confirmed to me during the stimulated recall that "*When I am teaching reading in English, learners can look at some of the words sounding the same as in English*". Although not all the sounds are the same in English as in Otjiherero, she believes some of them are the same. It is interesting to note that Abby believes that teaching grammar can help learners to read fluently using correct tenses. When asked during the stimulated recall, she said grammar deals with the language structures e.g. tenses, nouns, pronouns etc; therefore, teaching these structures can enhance learners' reading abilities.

It is interesting to note that Cassy's interpretation of a learner-centered approach is that it consists of group work. According to her perceptions, this approach which was adopted after independence, takes away her control over her class; she feels she is passive and learners are active.

4.3.3 The availability of books at home and at school

Abby reported that when she was young there were a lot of Afrikaans reading books in her home. Her parents had a big room where books were kept. She was able to page through these books. When she was in Grade 4, she read many storybooks both at home and at school. She said:

If I can remember very well, my teacher brought many stories in class for us to read. This created the love for reading in me. I liked reading in Grade 4 already because I was exposed to so many reading books.

This had evidently influenced her own teaching because she had a rich reading corner containing reading books, magazines and many storybooks in English and Afrikaans.

On the other hand, when asked whether she had storybooks at home, Cassy had this to say:

I did not have books to read at home and my parents could not afford to buy books for me to read. I just used the reader from the school, but despite of not having books at home I am proud to say, I can read.

Again, this may have influenced her practice because her reading corner did not have as many books as Abby's. A further contextual factor which Cassy did not mention, is that there are very few children's books written in Otjiherero, thus even if Cassy's parents had been able to afford them, not many books would have been available. However, in the case of Abby's home language, Afrikaans, there is a rich children's literature.

It is interesting to note that both teachers were able to read despite their differences in terms of children's literature in their homes and at school. However, looking at the reading corners in their classrooms, Abby had many story books whereas Cassy only had extracts from newspapers and the reader. Therefore, this suggests that the way they teach and support their learners' literacy is linked to their own early exposure to books both at home and at school, and also to the availability of books.

4.3.4 Qualifications and effectiveness of the respondents' former teachers

The two teachers were taught by teachers with Standard 6 education who were not professionally qualified. But although their teachers were not qualified, they were able to read already in Grade 4. Abby said:

If my mind serves me well, my teacher was having a few years of experience, which I cannot remember well.

Cassy also said:

Those days in the apartheid era, schools were mostly up to Standard 6 and many teachers were not qualified at all. I am also one of the Standard 6 teachers, except that I have upgraded myself and the important thing I can say is that I can read.

It is interesting to note that in the old dispensation, according to the teachers' beliefs, although teachers were not professionally qualified, they were able to teach learners how to read. When one compares today's teaching methods with those of the earlier days, it seems according to the teachers' perceptions, they could read and this influenced the way they teach reading in their classrooms. The section below reports on the strategies which the two teachers interviewed recall were used in teaching reading in the past.

4.4 STRATEGIES WHICH RESPONDENTS RECALL THEIR TEACHERS USING TO TEACH READING IN THE PAST

This section describes the strategies which my respondents claim were used by their teachers to teach them reading. The strategies were as follows:

- Phonic method
- Drilling e.g. the role of the Bible in learning to read
- Combined method
- Spelling and dictation

4.4.1 The Phonic Method

Both teachers mentioned that they were taught to sound out letters and words in the past. They said this was the common method used in the past even in Grade 4 and Abby had this to say:

I can remember very well that the sounding out of words depended in which grade you were and the story you were reading. There were word lists on the walls of the classroom, which we sounded out. Each day we sounded out words and read them over and over again both in Afrikaans and in English. This is the way we learnt how to read them by heart.

Cassy also noted that sometimes teachers used flash cards and learners were made to recognize such a word either by sounding or reading the word from memory. She also said:

I sounded words in my mother tongue and formulated sentences out of the words. I had to know the sounds and word lists which were given by the teacher.

From their responses both teachers indicated that through the phonic method, they learnt how to read. They sounded out words in the mother tongue more often than in any other language. They were drilled in saying the sounds on a daily basis.

Namibia. MBESC (2005) revised curriculum states that learners in Grade 4 should focus more on independent reading because reading at this stage should be purposeful and automatic. The curriculum does not therefore refer to the teaching of phonics in this grade. But looking back, the teachers' views are that the phonic method helped greatly in teaching learners how to read. Of course, we cannot rely on the accuracy of teachers' memories in this regard. Nevertheless, the phonic method is evidently still used to teach reading in the Grade 4 classrooms I visited during this study, particularly in Cassy's class. This suggests that teachers' beliefs influence the way they were taught in the past.

4.4.2 Drilling

Both teachers said drilling was the most common strategy used in the past. For example, teachers drilled vowel sounds with different consonants in their mother tongue and in Afrikaans. Cassy said it was necessary in Otjiherero to know and formulate words and sentences out of these sounds. Abby remembered very well that in Grade 4, they memorized the Bible verse of John 3: 16, which she said she can still recite up to now. She further said they recited substitution tables in order to know language structures e.g. collective pronouns and tenses. She even said that tenses were dealt with at a particular time, for example, if the week was meant for drilling the present tense, they drilled until they knew it and how it worked.

Both teachers believed that drilling had helped them to learn how to read. When asked if drilling had been used when they learnt to read in Grade 4, they both said that drilling was done throughout the Lower Primary phase and that it was done on a daily basis. When asked if they also used drilling in their classrooms, both said they did as this helped learners to recognize the sentence order and some of the common sight words. Abby said: *“I cannot do away with the way I was taught in the past totally. I still use some of the methodologies”*.

From what they said one sees that teachers’ beliefs and perceptions are shaped by the way they were taught in the past.

4.4.3 The use of a variety of methods

Both teachers said their own teachers had used a variety of methods when teaching reading in the classroom. Cassy said her teacher used techniques like flash cards (which are commonly used in the Look and Say method), vocabulary word lists and sight words. She said these were the methods she could remember her teacher using in Grade 4. Abby had this to say: *“My teacher used to combine the methods when teaching. She used any method she thought was suitable for us to understand”*.

According to Cassy, there is no best method for teaching reading; even the teachers in the past used the method they thought was best to enable the learners to read. It is interesting to note that both teachers mentioned that any method is good as long as learners are assisted to read.

4.4.4 Spelling/Dictation

Abby stressed that they did a lot of spelling and dictation when she was in Grade 4. She could remember very well that almost every Friday they had a spelling test on the vocabulary words they had done during the week. She said this forced her to learn and knew the words well. Abby recalled that the teacher dictated a paragraph to them from their class reader and they wrote the dictation without opening their reader. She said this forced them to have good listening skills and pay attention to what they were reading in a reader.

Cassy also said that the teacher dictated comprehension questions from the reader and they had to write answers in their exercise books. She elaborated further:

Sometimes these questions went up to twenty marks and the rule was to get half of the questions right. This also forced me to read the story over and over again in order to prepare for the dictation.

Abby said spelling and dictation were timetabled and it was necessary for them to have these tests. It is interesting to note that spelling and dictation were among the many components of reading instruction in the past and that, according to the respondents, this forced learners to learn to read.

The most interesting aspect of the respondents' recall of how they were taught to read is that according to the teachers' memories and perceptions their teachers seem to have used similar reading approaches though they were taught in two different settings.

I am now going to examine how these two teachers teach reading in their own classroom, looking at their experiences and strategies used in teaching reading currently in their classrooms.

4.5 DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' READING LESSONS

This section gives the reader an overview of how learners are taught to read in two Namibian classrooms. It focuses on the description of teachers' lessons, interviews and document analysis. Before I describe the teacher's lessons, I will explore their understanding of the concept of teaching reading and how they were trained in teaching reading in Grade 4. I will also explore how learners use library books to enhance their reading skills.

4.5.1 Teachers' understanding of teaching reading

Although both teachers have a similar understanding of what the concept of teaching reading entails, Cassy emphasizes reading as encoding whereas Abby includes the ability to read with understanding. Cassy said that *"If learners can open their mouths and read word by word, and words are coming out of their mouths then they are reading."* She also said, *"It is what policy says, learners should know how to read."* Whereas Abby said *"Learners must read with understanding so that they can answer questions from their reader or any other reading comprehension."*

During the interviews, when they were asked to give a definition of reading to gauge their understanding of teaching reading, Abby said: *"Reading is understanding what you are reading"*. She further defined reading by giving an example from her own school, where it is a policy that every morning before lessons begin, learners have to read for 20 minutes: *"I gave my learners to read five sentences from the reader and explained to me what they have read."* According to her this exercise has become a custom in her class because she wants to identify those learners who cannot read and try to help them achieve reading with understanding.

Cassy had this to say: *"For me reading is just reading whether with understanding or not."* She also cited an example that most of her learners in Grade 4 can read word by word in English. *"They are trying, of course, at least to open their mouth and read*

words.” To Cassy as long as learners opened their mouths that is reading and this was evident in her class when learners were reading. Although learners were not reading fluently with understanding she responded to them by saying, “*Good! You are now reading.*” But when she gave them five questions to answer in their exercise books, most of them struggled. Further evidence that for Cassy reading does not necessarily imply understanding is provided in her statement that, “*I can read other languages though I cannot understand what I read but I am able to read, to me that is reading*”.

In Abby’s class whenever learners were given comprehension questions, they were able to answer them correctly. You could see that in Abby’s class learners were able to answer questions verbally though they struggled to write up the answers. It was interesting to note how Abby and Cassy understood the teaching of reading. The different perspectives on how teachers perceive and teach reading were highlighted.

4.5.2 Teachers’ training in the teaching of reading

Abby said: “*The way I was trained to teach reading is through the Molteno Project workshop for Grade 1 in 2000, if I can remember correctly. But I was not trained on how to teach reading specifically in Grade 4.*” She said, “*Sometimes I always go and observe how other teachers are teaching reading in their classes. Advisory teachers should train us how to teach a reading lesson*”. She added that in her class she teaches the way she wants as long as children can read, it is fine with her.

Cassy said that although she had twenty-two years of teaching experience in the Lower Primary phase, she could not remember being trained to teach reading in Grade 4. Her first exposure to training occurred during a workshop for the new revised curriculum for Grades 3 - 4 when a facilitator demonstrated a reading lesson to teachers. She emphasized that teachers needed training to teach reading.

4.5.3 Using library books for reading

Teachers were asked whether learners in Grade 4 were allowed to take books from the library to read at home. Both teachers reported that learners were not allowed to take books home to read. Abby's learners were allowed to borrow books only during the third term. She said that since Basic Information Science (BIS) was no longer on the time-table, learners were not allowed to go to the library. When BIS was on the time-table in the old curriculum, learners automatically went to the library. But in the new curriculum BIS had been integrated into languages, so learners first had to be taught how to handle and take care of books. She recommended that parents buy reading books for their children but conceded that it was difficult for economic reasons. She said:

So what I will do during this second term, I will teach learners how to handle and take care of books, and only in the third term, they will enter the library and borrow books from the library and when they borrow books they are not allowed to take them at home but only to read them in the classroom.

Cassy also said that Grade 4 learners are not allowed to take books from the library to read at home. She said, *"They can borrow books from the library but they cannot go with the books at home"*; instead she kept the books in a cupboard. When asked why this was so, Cassy responded by saying that at the beginning of the year parents were told to buy story books for their children because they were not doing BIS anymore.

It is interesting to note that the principals of the two schools only seem to take a subject into consideration if it is on the time-table. Now that it is integrated, principals take it for granted that learners cannot borrow books to read at home. This state of affairs puts Grade 4 learners in an unfortunate position, as this is where the foundation should be properly laid in terms of reading. Furthermore, it is unlikely that parents can afford to buy books for their children. The new revised curriculum states that if learners cannot read they cannot be promoted to the next grade and lack of access to a library may place them in jeopardy.

4.5.4 Description of teachers' reading lessons

In the next section I describe the teachers' reading lessons and thereafter I give an analysis of both lessons. The comparison of lessons and the approaches used by these two teachers will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

4.5.4.1 Abby's reading lessons at Kamiyo Primary School

The learners in Abby's class were seated according to groups in the English reading class. Each group consisted of six to seven learners. Abby mixed the groups according to abilities so that those who could read could help those who were struggling to read. Abby's lesson was on the theme social environment, which she was teaching according to the syllabus. She plans her reading lessons for a week. The topic was a story about a hen, a cat and a mouse taken from the class reader. During the first reading lesson, each group took it in turns to read aloud together to the rest of the class. Abby said to the class:

Now pay attention, we are going to read in groups. I want group one to start and everyone should look in your reader.

Then group 1 started to read as follows:

Once upon a time there was a house on a hill. It had white walls, a red roof, two green windows and a blue door. It was a fine house, a very fine house. It was the home of Mr Cat, Miss Mouse and Mrs Hen.

Then group 2 started where group 1 left off:

One day Mrs Hen said, I'll make a cake. "A cake?" said Mr. Cat. "That will be very good. I like cake." "I like cake, too," said Miss Mouse.

Each group read aloud until everyone had taken a turn. Sometimes the teacher read with the groups to help them where they could not manage the text. Abby used phonics when a learner was having difficulty with the pronunciation of a word; she would point at the

first letter for the learner to sound till he/she pronounced the word correctly. Afterwards the teacher picked out the following vocabulary words from the story:

cloth, spoon, stove, porridge, sticks, bowl

These words were written on the chalkboard. Abby pointed at the first word and asked learners to read the word aloud. All the learners read the word correctly and simultaneously. Then she asked the learners, “*What do we use a cloth for?*” One of the learners answered, “*To wipe the dishes.*” Then the teacher said, “*There are many other things, you can use a cloth for.*” Another learner responded, “*My mother uses it in the kitchen*”. The teacher went to the next word, until all the words were dealt with. In Abby’s class learners used dictionaries when they were needed to look up the meaning of a word.

Abby’s second lesson was on reading comprehension. She gave the learners an extract from a non-fiction text about Hans Christian Anderson on a photocopied worksheet, which each child pasted in his/her exercise book. She began her lesson by reading the questions to the learners so that they should find answers from the text. The questions were as follows:

- In what country was Hans Anderson born?
- What was his father’s work?
- When did he start writing books?
- How many did he write?

Abby gave instructions to her learners as follows:

I want you to skim and scan through the text for five minutes and write the answers in your exercise books.

Learners were told to do this exercise silently and not to disturb others. Within the given time some of the learners were finished with the exercise. Those who finished earlier

went to the reading corner to pick up a book to read. This was a routine in her class, whenever learners were finished with their work, they went silently to the reading corner to pick up a book and read.

In the third lesson, Abby told the learners to pick out doing words from the story which was photocopied for learners again to paste in their exercise books (see Appendix 4). She told learners:

We are going to read the story individually as we are searching for doing words from the given passage.

She pointed at one learner to read the first paragraph and the learner read as follows:

Serena lived with her family on a hillside near a river. During the week, her parents went in town nearby. Serena walked to school on the other side of the hill with her friends. In the morning, her grandmother looked after her younger brother, Peter. In the afternoon, after doing her homework, Serena looked after him.

After reading the paragraph the teacher told the learners to underline the verbs in the paragraph. Then a second learner read the second paragraph and they underlined the doing verbs from it, until learners had completed underlining the verbs from the passage.

4.5.4.2 Cassy's reading lessons at Madala Primary School

The reading arrangements in Cassy's class were similar to Abby's class as Cassy's learners were also seated in groups. Cassy's first reading lesson was from a newspaper article from *The Namibian* entitled 'A frenzied panga attack sparked by N\$100.00' (see Appendix 5). She was also dealing with the theme from the Environmental Studies syllabus 'the social environment' on current issues and events in the region and she also planned her reading lessons for a week. She started her lesson with the phonics dealing with the following vowel sound:

-ar- sounds

are, arm, arts, area, arrest, ark, dark and arrival

These sounds were taught at the beginning of the lesson, and were written on a chart. The teacher pointed to the sounds and learners sounded them. These words were drilled for three days during my observations. When asked during the stimulated recall why she used these sounds, this is what she said: *“I use phonics because they help learners to read. Phonics is important because learners look at the letter and sound.”* She went on to say after finishing with the lesson, *“I will paste the chart on the wall for them to look, read and sound the words everyday and they will know the words incidentally.”*

After teaching the phonics, Cassy focused on the following vocabulary words from the text:

condition, serious, allegedly, attack, refusal, suspect, hospital, investigating and arrest.

These words were written on flash cards and were put upside down so that learners could not deliberately choose a simple word from which to construct a sentence. One learner in her class volunteered himself and picked the word ‘hospital,’ he constructed a sentence as follows:

My brother is in the hospital.

The same pattern was used with all the words. One learner picked the word ‘*allegedly*,’ she struggled with the pronunciation and the teacher helped her. But when it came to the meaning and putting it into a sentence, the learner failed. Then the teacher told the class that she would look up the word in the dictionary as she was not quite sure of the meaning of the word herself.

After all the vocabulary words were put into sentences, there was a class activity similar to Abby's in which learners read aloud from group to group. However, in this case, Cassy sometimes asked individuals and sometimes the whole group to read aloud. Cassy pointed at the first group to read the first paragraph and it was read as follows:

A 58- year old woman, Meschtilde Martin, is in a serious condition in the Intensive Care Unit of the Oshakati State Hospital after her son allegedly attacked her with a panga. Regional police commander Josef Anghuwo told the Namibian that the attack was apparently prompted by the woman's refusal to hand over N\$100.00 that her son had given to her for safekeeping.

After, the first group finished reading the first paragraph, the second group followed where the first group had left off. The process of reading in groups continued up to the last group in the class.

In her second and third lessons the same lesson content was repeated. The same phonic sounds were dealt with at the beginning of the lesson although new vocabulary words were taught, for example, *hacked, suspect, safekeeping, and apparently*. When asked why the same lesson had been taught for three days, the teacher said:

The reading lesson is having big words to understand and the text seemed difficult for the learners. So, I go over it slowly for a week so that learners can understand current issues in our region.

4.5.4.3 Analysis of teachers' reading lessons

Looking at both teachers' lessons, it is interesting to note that Abby's learners were able to read fluently and with understanding, the evidence being that in all the three lessons I observed, learners were able to answer questions on each task they were given. Whereas in Cassy's class learners struggled to read. When asked during the stimulated recall why most of her learners could not read fluently, Cassy answered that it was the background of the learners as they were used to mother tongue and to switch straight to English was a problem.

Cassy commented that fluency sometimes depended on the story. If the story was simple they could understand it easily, but if it had some difficult words they would struggle to read. Another important factor with regard to fluency was that Cassy was expecting her learners to read a very difficult text, which she had selected for them. Therefore it is not surprising that they could not read it fluently and with understanding.

Another problematic issue in Cassy's lesson was the way in which she taught -ar sounds. The following words were chosen from the passage to illustrate this sound: area, arrest and arrival. However, none of these three words contain the -ar sound (as in 'farm'). This suggests that the teacher might have a shallow understanding of English phonology herself. She did not seem to understand that she needed to focus on the sounds rather than the spelling of the words. Furthermore, the vocabulary words such as *suspect*, *condition*, *allegedly* and *investigating* were too difficult for children at this level.

The two teachers have differences and similarities in their approach to teaching reading in Grade 4 and this might be that their early reading exposure influences the way they teach. The comparison of their approaches in teaching reading will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

4.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have reported my findings on how two teachers teach reading in Grade 4 Namibian classrooms. I have explored how these teachers were taught to read in the past, the strategies their teachers used and how they themselves teach reading now. In the next chapter I will discuss the issues which emerged from my findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I discuss in more depth the findings reported in Chapter 4 and relate them to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The themes which emerged are also discussed in terms of my research goals and questions. As I discuss my findings, I also try to interpret the teachers' experiences in teaching reading and attach meaning to them.

Patton (1990: 423) argues that interpretation goes beyond the descriptive data:

Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order and dealing with rival explanations, disconfirming cases and data irregularities as part of testing viability of an interpretation.

I base my discussions, findings and interpretations on the themes that emerged from Chapter 4 which included:

- The role of mother tongue in teaching reading in English as a second language.
- The continuing status of Afrikaans as a lingua franca: teachers are still not really comfortable with teaching in English.
- Teachers' perceptions about the concept of teaching reading.
- Methods and techniques used by the teachers to teach reading.
- The use of libraries in enhancing reading skills.
- The importance of training teachers in teaching reading.

5.1.1 The role of the mother tongue in teaching reading in English as a second language.

Both teachers learned to read in their mother tongue, and they saw the value of this. Both were taught in a traditional and teacher-centred way. They see themselves as competent readers from the way they were taught to read in their mother tongue. They both believe that the role of mother tongue in teaching reading is a crucial factor because learners have been exposed to their mother tongue both for interaction and communication and they are thus competent in the language. For instance Abby, one of my research participants, said:

It is crucial to learn in mother tongue before reading in any other language. I read a lot in Afrikaans as my first language than in any other language. When I was in Grade 4, I could read fluently on my own and this gave me an opportunity to learn how to read in English.

Cassy, my other respondent, said:

Learners should read in their mother tongue in order to build on the second language. When I was in Grade 4, I was able to read and write a letter in Otjiherero.

Namibia. MBESC (2005) contends that:

Mother tongue is the language at the deepest level of identity of a person, and constitutes membership in the primary group in life. The teaching of reading in mother tongue should therefore draw on the cultural richness of the immediate environment. In the school setting the mother tongue is the means of conceptualizing everything preparatory to the introduction of the global language, English, as the medium of instruction.

The current practice in Namibia is that, learners are taught in mother tongue from Grades 1-3. English is taught as a subject in these grades. From Grade 4 onwards the medium of instruction is English and mother tongue is taught as a subject (Namibia. MEC, 1993 and Namibia. MBESC, 2005).

The literature discussed in Chapter 2 revealed that the mother tongue provides a rich cognitive preparation for second language learning (Webb 1999: 3). Cummins' (1979) linguistic theory highlights the same concern that when CALP is well developed in the first language it is easier to transfer it to the second language.

Although learning in mother tongue is important and is supported by my participants as well as the literature, it is not what happens in some schools. For example, in Abby's school, Afrikaans is used as the medium of instruction. However, there are some children who do not speak Afrikaans as their home language. Abby had this to say about the languages offered at her school:

I have a problem in enabling these learners to read as my school is an Afrikaans medium school, attended by different ethnic groups, learning in Afrikaans as the medium of instruction from Grades 1-3. English in Grade 4 becomes a problem because all along children have been used to Afrikaans. This makes teaching reading more difficult and more time consuming.

It is significant to note that whereas the policy advocates for mother tongue from Grade 1-3 and English from Grade 4, it is not what happens on the ground. It is worth noting that Abby's school is an urban school where many learners are multilingual and are taught in languages which are not their mother tongues. Cassy's school, on the other hand, is peri-urban and is dominated by learners who share a mother tongue.

My findings in Abby's class were that it was easier for some learners to get words right because they were using an Afrikaans dictionary to check the meaning. However, learners whose language was not Afrikaans found it difficult because they did not have a mother tongue dictionary to check from. The only learners who benefited were those speaking the same language as Abby. This left the other learners at a disadvantage. For Abby to help them understand the words took time because she needed to employ other methods to help them. Cassy herself struggles with pronunciation and explaining difficult words in English, as seen, when she explained the word 'allegedly' to her class.

Looking at this scenario, it is possible to see discrepancies in the use of language policy, as some of the schools are offering English and Afrikaans which are not the learners' mother tongues. My interpretation of this phenomenon is that the teaching of reading in Grade 4 becomes more difficult because of introducing learners to new languages which are not their mother tongue. This creates difficulties for teachers in Grade 4 to enable learners to read. On the other hand, some teachers are still not comfortable in teaching English. In the next section I discuss how Afrikaans continues to be a lingua franca in Namibia.

5.1.2 The continuing status of Afrikaans as a lingua franca teachers are still not really comfortable with teaching in English

There were also significant differences in the two teachers' early experiences of literacy. Abby had access to many books both at home and at school in her mother tongue whereas Cassy did not. Abby is Afrikaans speaking. When Abby was a child Afrikaans was a politically dominant language with a published children's literature supported by the social structure (government, the publishing industry, parents who could afford to buy the books). Cassy's home language, Otjiherero, on the other hand, could be seen as an oppressed language which, prior to independence, had little economic or political value. Very few, if any, children's books existed in the language.

The legacy of teaching Afrikaans persists in Namibia as many teachers were taught in Afrikaans, including those such as Cassy for whom it was a second language. Many teachers are still more comfortable in speaking, reading and writing in Afrikaans than in English. The sudden switch from Afrikaans to English in 1990 after independence created a problem in schools. Legere (1996) contends that this change led to serious problems in formal education and in other domains where people felt marginalized and second class citizens because they were not competent in the new official language, English.

My findings from the two teachers show that they themselves are not yet comfortable with teaching reading in English as a second language. A statement by Cassy is indicative of this discomfort:

Although I am Otjiherero speaking I can teach Afrikaans because I am used to speaking the language before and after independence than in English. Sometimes it is difficult to pronounce some of the words in English. The automatic switch to English in Grade 4 is a problem.

Abby agreed with Cassy in saying that she is most fluent in Afrikaans as it is her own mother tongue. Teaching in another language posed a problem for her too.

The most significant finding in this regard is that the two teachers in my study were more comfortable using Afrikaans than English. The switch from Afrikaans to English as an official language brought a lot of confusion due to the fact that most Namibians had little exposure to English. Woolfraadt et al. (2001) also note that this switch-over to English was a stressful move and certainly affected the entire education system in the country.

5.1.3 Teachers' perceptions on the concepts of teaching reading

Another issue that emerged from the data is teachers' perceptions of the teaching of reading. My respondents each attached a different meaning to the teaching of reading. The findings reveal that teachers' childhood experiences of literacy affect their beliefs and attitudes, their conceptualisation of reading and their current practices. This was reflected in their lesson presentations. Abby conceptualized the teaching of reading as enabling learners to read for understanding. Her reading lessons showed a great difference from those of Cassy's whose concept of teaching reading meant "*reading is just reading whether with understanding or not. As long as learners can open their mouth to read, that is reading*".

Furthermore, Abby is teaching in a context which supports her perception of reading for understanding. She follows a school policy which stresses that learners should be able to

read with understanding. The whole school spends twenty minutes reading every morning (Monday through Friday) before they start with any other lesson. This was evident during one of Abby’s lessons in which I observed her learners getting books from the reading corner and reading silently. Thereafter, the teacher and the learners discussed what they had read.

The literature contends that the function of reading is to comprehend written texts (Woollcot, 2002). Cassy’s view of reading does not incorporate understanding and is thus missing an important element.

To illustrate how these two teachers interpret the concept of teaching reading, the table below provides a comparison of how they applied their concepts in their own classrooms.

5.1.3.1 Comparison of teachers’ understanding of teaching reading

ABBY	CASSY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizes reading with understanding • Learners answer questions from the text to gauge their understanding of what they are reading • Supported by the school policy • Learners have to read five sentences from a text and explain what they have read • Helps those who cannot read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizes decoding • Learners read text word by word • Demands meaning of difficult vocabulary words • Selects difficult reading text and new words which learners struggle to read and understand. • Struggles with the meaning of the words herself.

This table clearly shows the differences between the ways in which the two teachers teach reading, which reflects their underlying understanding of what it means to teach reading based on their experience as learners. For example, in Cassy’s case (unlike Abby), it might result from her own lack of reading exposure to books either at home or school as a young child. The other reason might be the context in which these two

teachers find themselves. Abby’s school is well resourced and has a reading culture when compared to Cassy’s school, which does not.

Namibia. MBESC (2005) and Rees (1997) argue that learners in Grade 4 should read independently and automatically with understanding. In Cassy’s class this is not the case because learners are still reading word by word without understanding, making it difficult for them to become independent readers. Consequently, learners are not going to develop a love for reading, but rather have a shallow decoding view of reading. Learners in Cassy’s class are unlikely to develop automaticity and become fluent readers (Armbruster et al., 2001; Stanovich as cited in Murray, 2006).

5.1.4 Methods and techniques used by the teachers in teaching reading

The two teachers had similarities and differences when it came to the methods they used to teach reading in Grade 4. The table below shows the similarities and differences.

5.14.1 Teaching strategies used by the two teachers in teaching reading

Method/Technique	Similarities	Differences	
		Abby	Cassy
-Phonic Method	- Both use phonics.	Abby uses phonics only when learners are stuck with the pronunciation of the words	-teaches phonics heavily throughout the three lessons observed - makes some mistakes with sound e.g. -ar-sounds- ‘area’ not ‘ar’, ‘arrest’ not ‘ar’ (Chapter 4 section 4.5.4.2)
- Intensive reading using selected texts	- both teachers select their own short texts to teach reading	- chooses a text which is at a level appropriate for her learners’ stage of reading development and knowledge of English	- selects a text which is much too difficult for her learners and therefore has to repeat the lesson
-Teaching vocabulary	Both use vocabulary words from the	-Chooses simple vocabulary words from	-chooses difficult vocabulary from the newspaper article e.g.

	text/extract/article	the stories e.g. cloth, spoon, stove, etc. -Focuses on meaning e.g. ask learners what a cloth is used for.	condition, allegedly, investigating -teacher and learners are stuck with meaning of the word 'allegedly' -Promises to look for meaning in the dictionary.
-Skimming and scanning	-No similarities	- gives learners a text to skim and scan to search for answers to the given questions.	-Cassy did not use this strategy of skimming and scanning
-Reading aloud in groups	- Both use group reading	Asks learners to read aloud in groups to help them with pronouncing words.	The teacher helps learners while reading as the text was too difficult for them to read.

Both teachers were taught in a traditional and teacher-centred way involving phonics, rote learning and drilling. It is apparent that Abby's methods of teaching reading are consistent with her beliefs about learning to read. Similarly, Cassy's practices are in line with her belief that reading is simply decoding without necessarily understanding; this may result from their different childhood experiences of reading. It could also be attributed to lack of explicit methods and strategies for teaching reading in the English Second Language Syllabus in Grade 4. What the syllabus stipulates is that learners should:

- Read factual and fictional text in groups/pairs/individually.
- Recognise style and meaning.
- Skim text.
- Find and extract information from textbooks and books in the library.

Abby tries to implement some of these strategies when teaching reading in her class as seen in her practice (see table above) whereas Cassy relies heavily on the teaching of

phonics in her class, which should already have been dealt with in lower grades. Chatry-Komarek (1996: 41) argues that:

In most African countries phonics instruction has been misused for teaching language 2. Phonics is often associated with lists of both words unknown and used out of context. In such cases phonics become boring because emphasis is put on learning the letter relationship at the cost of understanding.

What Chatry-Komarek argues is evident in Cassy's teaching using phonics. Furthermore, she struggles with phonics when the words she is dealing with are not of high frequency. For example, she confuses the vowel sounds in words like *arrest*, *area* and *arrival*, believing that because of their spelling they contain an 'ar' sound. It may be that she is not familiar with the pronunciation of these words and cannot hear the different phonemes. This is a problem for many teachers because English vowel sounds are difficult for speakers of African languages. This creates problems in the use of phonics and it is an issue that needs to be addressed in teacher education.

A comparison of the two teachers reveals the social structure reproducing itself. The relative advantages and disadvantages of Abby and Cassy with regard to literacy are perpetuated in their beliefs, attitudes and the way they teach, and this continues to affect the children in their classes.

5.1.5 The use of libraries in enhancing reading skills

There is evidence that the early experiences of these two teachers are reinforced by the kind of schools in which they teach. Abby's school has a good library and a strong culture of reading whereas Cassy's school has a mini-library with few books in it. As mentioned already in Chapters 2 and 4, the literature suggests that one of the core functions of the library is to support the development of literacy competencies.

According to the teachers, learners should get access to the library in order to develop a love of reading. Without access to the library children will not become part of a reading

culture (Jackson, 2003). Libraries play a central role in terms of literacy development according to Jackson (2003).

The teachers in this study claimed that learners in Grade 4 are likely to develop a culture of reading if they are allowed to go to the library to choose appropriate books for themselves. If they are not introduced to books, an appreciation and love of reading will not be developed. According to the teachers, the culture of reading is not well developed because many parents in Namibia cannot afford to buy books for their children to read. In addition, Namibia has few libraries countrywide, an aspect that contributes to the slow development of a reading culture.

My participants felt that learners in Grade 4 should be allowed to borrow books from school libraries to read at home. They also felt that children should borrow books from the library in the first trimester. In the case of Abby, learners are only allowed to borrow books from the library in the third trimester. Cassy's case is different because learners cannot borrow books at all. The reason why these learners are not allowed to borrow books is because BIS has been integrated into the languages subject area in line with the new curriculum.

5.1.6 The importance of training teachers to teach reading

Both my participants indicated that since they started teaching they had not undergone any training workshop or course on teaching reading in Grade 4. Neither of the teachers had received much in-service support on how to teach reading, so they were largely dependent on how they had learned to read themselves, on their pre-service teacher education and, in the case of Abby, on a Molteno course. What these participants have been doing is class observation as one of their Heads of Department demonstrates how to teach a reading lesson.

The research literature also revealed that most of the teachers in Namibia teach reading the way they were trained in their BETD and through observations of other teachers as

they teach reading in their classes (Van Graan & Imene 2000). But looking at Cassy, who is a BETD in-service graduate, she denied this by saying that she had never attended any reading courses in her training. Therefore, there is a need to introduce training courses and workshops on the teaching of reading in Namibia to enhance teachers' skills in this regard.

It is interesting to note that Cassy has twenty-two years of teaching experience and had not attended any workshop on the teaching reading in Grade 4. This needs attention as training courses enable teachers to understand and implement how they should teach reading in their classrooms.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The findings of this research are that both teachers in the study teach reading in similar ways to that in which they learned and were taught to read in the past. In considering factors which influenced teachers' beliefs, their early exposure and the context in which they find themselves seems to have been a dominant factor amongst the participants. For example, Abby' school is well resourced, it has a reading culture and she was exposed to books in her own childhood. On the other hand, Cassy's school is less well resourced with few books in their library and with only extracts from newspapers and a reader in her classroom. She speaks Otjiherero and there is very little children's literature in this language.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of my study has been the way teachers teach reading in Grade 4 and how their beliefs and experiences shape the way they teach. In this chapter, I present an overview and reflections on my findings. I highlight the main arguments and the strength of my study in relation to teachers' beliefs and practices in the teaching of reading. The main strength of the study is the finding that the concepts of teaching reading and classroom practice still pose a problem to the teachers due to their past experiences, exposure to literature and the difference in backgrounds of the mother tongue speakers in the classroom. I also describe some limitations of the study and make a few recommendations for further research in this field.

6.2 POTENTIAL VALUE OF MY STUDY

The potential value of this study is drawn from my research questions, which looked at teachers' beliefs about teaching reading, their perception of reading and how reading is taught in Grade 4. Central to this, is my involvement as a Subject Advisor in the Lower Primary phase. The study gave me insight into the teaching of reading in the vital transitional grade. This will enable me to provide better support for teachers with regard to the teaching of reading.

The study provided me with valuable insights in terms of understanding how early exposure to books and formal schooling influence the way teachers teach. This helped me to understand the influence of the context in which early exposure to reading is based.

6.3 REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This section provides an overview of my research journey. It includes lessons learnt during the journey that added layers to my understanding of carrying out research in education. This understanding will help me to support, guide and monitor how learners are taught how to read in the Lower Primary phase in my role as an Advisory teacher. The process of the research was indeed valuable and an eye-opener to me as a novice researcher.

Since my topic was to obtain a deep understanding of how teachers teach reading and how their beliefs and experiences influenced their classroom instruction when teaching reading in English in Grade 4, I located my study in an interpretive paradigm. I used a case study which helped me to collect data and to triangulate it. This helped me to see patterns, similarities and differences across the data which enabled me obtain answers to my research questions. It gave me an opportunity to understand my research participants by the way they answered the interview questions.

The main purpose of my study was to inform my own practice as a Subject Advisor, and it succeeded in this regard.

6.4 OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

The key findings of this study are derived from the interviews with respondents, classroom observations and document analysis. What emerged strongly from these findings is that the way teachers teach is influenced by the context in which they find themselves, the curriculum, their beliefs, previous experience and the way they were trained to teach reading.

There were similarities and differences between the teachers. In the context of Abby's practice it is observable that her past experience and her approach to the teaching of reading work well with her class. Her school is well resourced in terms of reading books,

both in her class and in the school library. As a child, Abby had access to many books at home in her mother tongue Afrikaans, the dominant language at the time.

In contrast, Cassy who teaches in a peri-urban school where few books are found and who has to rely on age inappropriate newspaper extracts, reveals less exposure to reading materials, less school support (as in lack of books) and therefore poor practice.

Otjiherero could be seen as an oppressed language which prior to independence had little economic or political value. These early experiences are reinforced by the kind of schools in which the two teachers find themselves.

Another finding is that although both teachers follow the curriculum, there are discrepancies in the way the curriculum is administered. For example, the approaches Cassy uses in teaching reading are influenced by the way she was taught in the past. Cassy makes heavy use of phonics on a daily basis in her teaching, whereas Abby uses a variety of teaching techniques when teaching reading. Therefore, the relative advantages and disadvantages of the two teachers with regard to literacy are perpetuated in their beliefs, attitudes and the way they continue to affect the children in their classes. From the teachers' interviews, it emerged that their practices are also led by their beliefs and training backgrounds.

The study further shows that both teachers were taught in a traditional, teacher-centered way involving phonics, rote learning and drilling. Because they see the value in the way they were taught and regard themselves as competent readers, they believe this approach had a good deal of value and it continues to affect the way they teach.

Another factor which influences the way they teach is that neither of the teachers had received much in-service support on how to teach reading, so they were largely dependent on how they had learned to read themselves, on their pre-service teacher education and in the case of Abby, on a Molteno course.

Finally, as a Subject Advisor responsible for this phase I came to understand the challenges teachers and learners face in the transitional grade where all textbooks are in English, their second language.

I hope that the findings of this study as presented in Chapter 4 will be useful to my fellow Advisory teachers, teachers, NIED curriculum members, policy makers, educational researchers, parents and learners. I also hope that this study will bring changes in how learners are taught how to read.

The following gaps emerged from my study:

- Teaching strategies on how to teach reading in Grade 4 are not outlined in the curriculum.
- The curriculum does not stipulate selection of suitable materials for teaching reading in Grade 4

6.5 TENTATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

After reflecting on my findings, I offer the following tentative recommendations:

- Teachers should select relevant reading materials according to the level of the learners.
- Advisory teachers should train and support teachers with relevant materials to enhance reading skills.
- Regular workshops on teaching reading should be done in schools.
- Teacher training institutions should ensure that teachers are well trained in the methods of teaching reading and interpretation of the curriculum.
- The curriculum should contain the methodology of teaching reading.
- NIED should monitor the implementation of the curriculum.
- Principals of schools should be trained in curriculum implementation and note any changes that may appear in new or revised curricula.

- Since most learners struggle with reading, more research is needed in this area to find out what proper educational intervention programmes could be put in place to assist learners become better readers.
- We need to investigate factors contributing to the learners' struggle to become competent readers both in their first language and second language.
- Publishers should design materials that are relevant to learners' interests and levels of understanding.

6.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

I believe that there is a great need for follow up research in the field of teaching reading in Namibia. Recommendations from such research could be used to enhance academic achievements particularly in the field of reading right from Grade 1.

Further research could be undertaken in the following areas.

- Exploration of teachers' beliefs and perceptions regarding the teaching of reading.
- A critical investigation of how children are taught to read in two languages in the Namibian context.
- An investigation into how teacher training institutions could enhance the teaching of reading in schools.
- An investigation into how teacher support could be provided by the Subject Advisors.
- A study on the methodologies of teaching reading in Namibian schools.

6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

I used the case study method, focusing on two schools in the Otjozondjupa region, working with a small sample of only two teachers; therefore, the findings may not be generalisable to all teachers in the region and to Namibia as a whole. A larger sample studied over a longer period of time would have given more generalisable results but

the time constraints of a half thesis did not allow for this. Nevertheless, the findings provided me with unique insight into what happens in two Grade 4 literacy classes in Namibia. Kaufmas (quoted in Smulyan, 2000: 43) explains:

By viewing social change through the lens of individual experiences, we are able to move away from infinite generalizations and abstractions and into the realm of individual constructions of meaning. Through the examination of...individuals' lives, we gain access both to multi-faceted meaning of the self-within the culture and to a richer, more detailed portrait of the culture which contributes to and is constituted by those meanings.

At a practical level, I realized that the time frame given in conducting the half-thesis is a limiting factor on the depth and scope of this kind of study as mentioned earlier. Because of time and resource constraints, my findings are based only on interviews, classroom observation and document analysis related to two teachers. If I had more time and resources, the study may have covered more respondents, more schools and even the learners in Grade 4.

Another limitation was that I did not have a male teacher to obviate gender bias. The reason for this was that in all the schools I visited only female teachers taught in Grade 4.

6.8 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this research are that teachers' practices are influenced by the way they were taught in the past, their formal training and the context in which they find themselves. Their beliefs shape and continue to affect the way they teach reading in their classrooms.

The other factor that affects the teaching of reading is lack of in-service training on how reading should be taught in Grade 4. It remains a challenge as neither of the teachers received any training or guidance on how to teach reading in Grade 4 nor had they the benefit of in-service training except for Abby who had been on a Molteno course. The

curriculum, too, provides little assistance in that it does not elaborate on the teaching approaches/strategies to be used when teaching reading.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 (a): Letter to the Director requesting permission

Private Bag 2618
OTJIWARONGO
Namibia
27 February 2006

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Request for permission to conduct a research in your schools

I am a part-time student with Rhodes University and my student number 605 M 3632. I have been studying for a Master of Education Degree (GETP) since February 2005. I would be very grateful if you will allow me to use your schools as my research site for the research report which I am required to write.

The aim of my research project is to study the teaching of reading in English in Grade 4 Namibian classrooms. If I am allowed to conduct my research at your two schools namely Kamiyo and Madala (pseudonyms), I will further ask the school principals for permission to go into schools and conduct this research. Furthermore, teachers with whom I will be working with will be requested to be interviewed. Classroom observations for three reading lessons shall be conducted. After each lesson observation, some discussions (stimulated recall) vis-à-vis the lesson shall be held with the teacher's concerned. Some documents will be analyzed. The interviews and discussions shall be tape recorded for transcription thereafter.

The school and teachers are assured of anonymity in the final research report, and the transcription shall be returned to the teacher involved to proof read and for making final comments.

I hope that this request will be granted. Should you have any further concerns and/or queries about this request, please contact me at 067 308 000 during working hours or 067 301 295 and 081 252 5022 after hours.

Yours sincerely,

Josephine Mutenda

APPENDIX 1 (b): Letter to School Principals

Private Bag 2618
OTJIWARONGO
Namibia
27 February 2006

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Re: Request for permission to conduct a research at your school

I am a part-time student with Rhodes University and my student number is 605M3632. I have been studying for a Master of Education Degree (GETP) since February 2005. I would be most grateful if you will allow me to use your school as one of my research sites for the research report which I am requested to write.

The aim of my research project is to study the teaching of reading in English as a Second Language in Grade 4 Namibian classrooms. If I am allowed to conduct my research at your school, the teachers I will be working with shall be interviewed. Classroom observations for three reading lessons shall be conducted. After each lesson observation, some discussions (stimulated recall) vis-à-vis the lesson shall be held with the teachers concerned. Some documents will be analyzed. The interviews and discussions shall be tape recorded for transcription thereafter.

The school and teachers concerned are assured of anonymity in the final research report. The transcriptions shall be returned to the teacher involved to proof read and make final comments.

I hope this request shall be granted. Should you have any concerns and queries about this request, please contact me at 067 308 000 during working hours or 067 301 295 and 081 252 5022 after hours.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Josephine Mutenda

APPENDIX 1 (c): Letter to teachers

Dear Grade 4 teachers

I am registered for a Master of Education Degree (GETP) with Rhodes University. To qualify for my Master's Degree I am required to write a research report that specifically looks at the teaching of reading in Grade 4. In this case, I will be required to answer the following research questions:

- What are teachers' beliefs in teaching reading?
- How do they perceive reading?
- How is reading taught in English as a second Language in Grade 4 classes?

I request that you assist me answer the above research questions by completing the attached consent forms.

Your anonymity in this research is guaranteed.

Thank you,

Yours sincerely,

Josephine Mutenda

APPENDIX 1 (d): Consent Form 1 from the Director

Josephine Mutenda is hereby given permission to conduct interviews, classroom observations and to analyze documents as part of her research process in data collection. This will help her write a research report that is required as part of fulfillment for her Masters degree with Rhodes University.

I understand that transcripts of the interviews, discussions and extracts from the school documents will be made and used in her final report. I have been assured that the school, principals and teachers involved in the research process will have anonymity and they will be given part of the report to verify the information.

Signed:.....

Date:

APPENDIX 1 (e): CONSENT FORM 2 (From the Principal)

Josephine Mutenda is hereby given permission to conduct interviews and observe teachers as part of the process of data collection for her research report that she will be writing in completion of her Master’s Degree.

I am aware that interview transcripts and extracts will be used in the final report. I have also been assured that my school, teachers and I will have anonymity in that report.

Signed: Date:

APPENDIX 1 (f): CONSENT FORM 3 (From Teachers)

I hereby agree to participate in an interview, classroom observations, document analysis as well as stimulated recall with Josephine Mutenda who is conducting research on teaching reading in Grade 4. I understand that she will be seeking answers for her research questions on how reading is taught in Grade 4.

I have been assured of anonymity in the final report.

Signed Date:.....

APPENDIX 2: PILOT STUDY INTERVIEW

Interviewer: How long have you been teaching?

Interviewee: Yeah, Ummmm.... I have been teaching since 2003 and this is my fourth year of teaching.

Interviewer: Is this your fourth year teaching? (*Repeated question to satisfy my curiosity. Many lower primary teachers have more than 10 and above teaching experience*).

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: What kind of teacher training did you do?

Interviewee: I did Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD) at Windhoek College of Education.

Interviewer: What did you specialize in at the college?

Interviewee: My major at College was Mathematics and Science Grade 8-10 and my minor was English Grade 5-7.

Interviewer: What Grades do you teach?

Interviewee: Ammmmm! When I came here in 2003, I started teaching Physical Science Grade 8, and Natural Science Grades 4, 5, and 6. In my second and third year I taught the same subjects as in my first year. In 2006 my Principal instructed me to teach Grade 4 meaning that I teach all the subjects except German as a subject.

Interviewer: Are you the class teacher in Grade 4?

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Why are you teaching Grade 4 if you were trained to teach Grades 8-10?

Interviewee: Really I don't know because at the end of each year, we have to choose which subjects we want to teach. As of this year, I was called in by the Principal and asked to start teaching Grade 4. In our school class teaching is from Grade 1- 3 but in other schools it is from Grades 1-4.

Interviewer: Do you know the reason why the principal picked on you and not any other teacher?

Interviewee: I really don't know why he did that?

Interviewer: Are you happy teaching Grade 4?

Interviewee: Not really, because I have little knowledge about Arts but since Arts have to be taught in Grade 4, I found myself with no choice.

Interviewer: So it means you are teaching Grade 4 which you are not happy with? In other words were you forced?

Interviewee: Yeah, It is like I am forced to teach Grade 4.

Interviewer: What language do you teach reading and writing in?

Interviewee: In my school we only have English as the medium of instruction, which is the second language.

Interviewer: I did not get it which language again?

Interviewee: English

Interviewer: Do you have a school or class library?

Interviewee: We have a school library.

Interviewer: And not a class library?

Interviewee: We sometimes go to the library and take the books to our class, or learners bring books from home and we put them in the class cupboard which acts as

our class library. During our reading lessons, I ask learners to fetch books from this cupboard and read in the class.

Interviewer: Are your learners able to take books from the school library to go and read at home?

Interviewee: Yes they are. Yes! (Amm-ahhh - a little pause) like I can remember last year, they were allowed to go to the library and fetch books, but this year they were not allowed. They are however allowed to take books from the library to the class. At the beginning of this year at a parents meeting, we told parents to buy stories books for their children to read at home because they cannot take books any more since they are not doing Basic Information Science.

Interviewer: How does BIS prevent learners from borrowing books to go and read at home?

Interviewee: You know, the old curriculum provided BIS to be on the time table but now it is integrated with languages in the new curriculum.

Interviewer: Are parents buying story books for their learners to read at home?

Interviewee: Yea! Some parents do but some don't.

Interviewer: Do you know the reason why some of the parents do not buy books for their children?

Interviewee: Ummmm- actually if you ask children, they say that their parents say they do not have money.

Interviewer: Do you think that the Grade 4 is utilizing the library fully?

Interviewee: Not really, only when we have reading lessons it's when they go to the library to take books and read in the class. But the Grades 5, 6, and 7 have lessons for Basic Information and Science and therefore use the library fully.

Interviewer: How were you taught to read when you were a child?

Interviewee: When I was a child, I attended school where the subjects were taught in mother tongue. I first started learning how to read with my mother teaching me how to read and write word such as ‘mother’, ‘father’, ‘sister’, ‘brother’ and so on. When I went to school and compared what my mother was teaching me, I caught up because it was exactly the same.

Interviewer: Were you happy the way you were taught reading in the past?

Interviewee: Yes I was happy; the thing is if you are learning something in your mother tongue as well as in English together, I think it is the best way of learning. On the other hand, if you are learning something in another language apart from your mother tongue it becomes so difficult.

Interviewer: Were you learning reading in your mother tongue?

Interviewee: Those days are different from these days. Schools now have mixed learners from different cultures. For example in my school we do not have mother tongue and they just start straight away with English.

Interviewer: If I can go back to the question of being happy in the way you were taught reading, what are the things that made you happy?

Interviewee: I attended my primary education in one school from Grade 1-10. I was happy because I had English as my second language and my mother tongue as my first language. So if there is something I did not understand then I had to ask it in my mother tongue. Nowadays with classrooms that are of mixed races you just have to explain in English.

Interviewer: What strategies did your teacher use when teaching reading?

Interviewee: If I can remember what the teacher was using, (pause) I can’t remember well now, but teachers used something like flash cards or posters. During reading lesson the teacher would write the word on the poster or on a flash card then read the word as we listened. She would pronounce the word in

its syllables and use fingers to demonstrate the number of syllables in the word. Then she would point at the word again and again. We would read the word individually and all of us together. I think that is how I was taught.

Interviewer: Is there a difference between how you were taught in the past and now?

Interviewee: Yes, I think there is a great difference because I sometimes do not apply the methods I was taught how to read. I just tell the learners to open on a certain page and start reading. But some learners find it difficult to read the words on the page. If the page has a story the learners just look at their books as if they are reading but nothing is happening. Then the teacher starts reading for them and asks if learners are following. If they say yes, end of the story. Learners are just reading without understanding. So there is a big difference.

Interviewer: How according to your own experience should reading be taught?

Interviewee: I prefer the way I was taught because if for example, you are teaching how to read the word 'happy', I would prefer to write it on the chalkboard for all the learners to read after me and sometimes write the word in the air for children to practice.

Interviewer: So if we go back to the way we were taught in the past, would children learn to read?

Interviewee: Yes they would!

Interviewer: How?

Interviewee: Yes! I think learners would read, teachers should just do it the same way we were taught.

Interviewer: Do you think that teachers are now not writing words on the chalkboard for learners to read?

Interviewee: No, teachers are now using photocopies of stories and give learners to read. Sometimes these copies will be given to them to go and read at home. Teachers don't even touch the chalkboard.

Interviewer: How do you teach reading in your class?

Interviewee: Okey, Miss, if I have a reading lesson in my class, what I always do is I tell my learners to open their reading books on page ..., then I write the sight words on the chalkboard. After that I tell them to put these words into sentences. Then I read one paragraph and ask them to read after me. I ask them to read one by one and in groups. If they do not follow I try to see who is struggling. Then I write difficult words on the chalkboard and drill the learners on how to read those words. Then I point at different learners to see who is still struggling with the words on the chalkboard.

Interviewer: Do you think doing this will enable learners to read?

Interviewee: No, but this is also another way of teaching reading. I write words on the chalkboard so that they can see them and practice how to spell them. I then read the words so that learners get to know how particular words are pronounced. If you however have 30 learners in the class it is difficult to make sure everyone is reading.

Interviewer: Why do you think teaching reading is important?

Interviewee: Teaching reading is important because it enables the learners to answer examination questions as they come to Grade 7, 10 and 12. Learners who fail to read at an early stage find it difficult in upper grades.

Interviewer: How many children can read in your class?

Interviewee: I will say 30% of my learners know how to read and 15% are somehow on average, the rest cannot read at all.

Interviewer: What do you do with those who cannot read?

Interviewee: Those who cannot read are given extra reading classes. We sit together in the afternoons and I give them individual attention to help in their reading.

Interviewer: Let us go back to the question of the importance of reading. What can teachers do to get learners read?

Interviewee: We must encourage them to read and parents also must help them to read at home.

Interviewer: What problems do you encounter when teaching reading?

Interviewee: The problem which I always experience is the sounding of words like 'ask' and 'axe'. Learners use these words differently. For instance, they would read the word 'axe' as 'ask'.

Interviewer: In other words pronunciation is a problem?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: What can teachers do to solve the problem of pronunciation?

Interviewee: It is very difficult to deal with pronunciation because of we talk in our mother tongue; we say words according to our languages. As a teacher, I still have problems with some words.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your time

Interviewee: Thank you.

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

ABBY (KAMIYO PRIMARY SCHOOL)

Interviewer: Question 1: How long have you been teaching in Grade 4?

Abby: I have been teaching for 11 years now but not only in Grade 4 but also at the secondary school. Actually this is my fifth year teaching in Grade 4.

Interviewer: Question 2: What kind of teacher training did you do?

Abby: I did the Higher Education Diploma (HED). It is a General Diploma majoring in Sciences and languages from the University of the Orange Free State in South Africa.

Interviewer: Question 2 (a): Apart from your qualifications are you married?

Abby: Yes, I am married with two children.

Interviewer: Question 3: What Grade do you teach and how many learners do you have in your class?

Abby: I am currently teaching Grade 4 and I have 40 learners in my class.

Interviewer: Question 3 (a): What language do you teach reading and writing in?

Abby: I teach reading in English as a medium of instruction in Grade 4 and in Afrikaans as a subject.

Interviewer: Question 3 (b): Why do you teach reading in two foreign languages, don't you have mother tongue as a subject?

Abby: Yes, This is an Afrikaans medium school. So, all the learners have to be taught in Afrikaans from Grades 1-3 and in English as a subject. Then from Grade 4 the language changes from Afrikaans to English as a medium of instruction and Afrikaans is taught as a subject. That's why I teach reading in two foreign languages.

Interviewer: Question 3 (c): Which languages are you comfortable with in teaching reading?

Abby: I am comfortable teaching in Afrikaans as it is my mother tongue.

Interviewer: Question 3 (d): Why is it important to learn in your mother tongue?

Abby: You know, it is crucial to learn in the mother tongue before reading in any foreign language. It is easier because it is the language you are used to speaking at home.

Interviewer: Question 4: Do you have a school library or a reading corner in your class?

Abby: Yes, we have a library and I have a reading corner in my class.

Interviewer: Question 4 (a): Are your learners able to borrow books from the library to go and read at home?

Abby: Yes, Ammmm! But not at the moment, they will borrow books from the library as from the third term.

Interviewer: Question 4 (b): Why are they not allowed to borrow books from the library?

Abby: Because in the past, when we were having BIS as a subject they were allowed to borrow books. There was a syllabus to teach the children how to handle and take care of the library books. Since BIS is now integrated into languages according to the new revised curriculum, they are not allowed to borrow books. I have first to teach them how to handle books. So what I will do during this second term, I will teach learners how to handle and take care of books, and only in the third term, they will enter the library and borrow books from the library and when they borrow books there are not allowed to take them at home but only to read them in the class.

Interviewer: Question 4 (c): Let me go back to the question, do you have a reading corner in your class?

Abby: All yes, I have a reading corner in my class. I have Afrikaans and English story books for learners to read in my class. I have also extracts from newspapers and magazines at the reading corner. So, if they are finished with whatever there were doing, they go to the reading corner to pick up a book and read silently.

Interviewer: Question 5: How were you taught how to read when you were a child?

Abby: I was taught in my own mother tongue Afrikaans. I read a lot in Afrikaans than in any language and Afrikaans is my first language. When I was in Grade 4, I could read fluently on my own and this gave me an opportunity to learn to read in English. I liked school because it was relevant to what I read at home and I understood what the teacher taught very well. In the past where teacher centered approach or rote learning was dominant, I was able to read. My teacher, if my memory serves me well in Grade 4 used to teach us Grammar e.g. substitution table where pronouns, verbs and nouns were grouped. We drilled forming sentences out of the table. I was able to identify a sentence in the present, past and future tense. We memorized text from the Bible, yet we knew how to read. I am happy with the way I was taught in the past and I could not be a teacher today if it could not be for rote learning.

Interviewer: Question 5 (a): Is rote learning the best way to teach reading?

Abby: Yeah, I think so; you can not throw away what was good about it. I like it and it enabled me to know how to read.

Interviewer: Question 5 (b): Is there a difference between the way you were taught in the past and now?

Abby: Yes, because children knew how to read already as from Grade 1. But in my school since it is an Afrikaans medium school and most of the learners are not Afrikaans speaking they do struggle a lot when it comes to reading. It takes time to enable them to read fluently and with understanding. It is difficult for them to

read because they are not taught in their mother tongue. I feel that it is better to teach learners in their own mother tongue than in a second language.

Interviewer: Question 5 (c): Are you happy the way you were taught in the past in Grade 4?

Abby: Of course I am happy, a child who cannot read will struggle throughout her/his schooling. Because what ever we do contains reading whether it is numbers or whatever. If it could not be for those teachers in the past I could not read. But now I am happy I am able to read and you know if my memory serves well, my teacher was having a few years of experience, which I cannot remember well, but she was able to teach us how to read. I am really happy.

Interviewer: Question 6: Where you having enough story-books both at home and at school to enable you to know how to read?

Abby: Yes, at home my parents had a lot of Afrikaans books in a big room. I was able to page through these books and when I was in Grade 4 I read many story books at home and at school. If I can remember very well, my teacher brought many stories in class for us to read. This created the love for reading in me. I liked reading in Grade 4 already because I was exposed to so many reading books.

Interviewer: Question 7: What strategies/methods did your teacher use in Grade 4 to teach you how to read?

Abby: I remember very well teachers used a variety of methods. My teacher used to combine the methods when teaching. She used any method she thought was suitable for us to understand. The sounding of words depended in which grade you were and the story you were reading. There were words lists on the wall of the classroom, which we sounded out. Each day we sounded out words and read them over and over again both in Afrikaans and in English. This is the way we learnt how to read by heart. The other strategy is drilling. We drilled the Bible verse of John 3:16 and I can recite it even today. We drilled a lot of things for example; we recited the substitution tables in order to know language structures

e.g. collective pronouns and tenses. Tenses were dealt with at a particular time, for example; if the week was meant for drilling the present tense, we drilled until we knew it and how it worked.

Interviewer: Question 7 (a): Which other strategies/methods did your teacher use in teaching you how to read?

Abby: We also did a lot of spelling and dictation when I was in Grade 4. I can remember very well that almost every Friday we had a spelling test on the vocabulary words we had done during the week. This forced us to learn and know the words well. My teacher also dictated a paragraph to us and we wrote the dictation without opening our reader. This forced us to have good listening skills and pay attention to what we were reading in a reader.

Interviewer: Question 8: How according to your own experiences should reading be taught in Grade 4?

Abby: Learners should read to understand. If they just read without understanding then there are not reading. They should be able to answer comprehension questions from the text or reader. They should read the vocabulary and sight words, know the meaning of the words.

Interviewer: Question 8 (a): Are you doing this in your class?

Abby: Yes, I teach my learners to read with understanding. Sometimes I drill with them on the text they do not understand in order to help them to recognize the sentence order and some of the common sight words. Learners in Grade 4 should be able to read few sentences in English already.

Interviewer: Question 8 (b): How do you teach reading in your class?

Abby: Ohh, in my class, I use a lot of strategies in teaching my learners how to read to enable them to understand. I teach reading according to the way I was taught in the past. Because I cannot do away with the way I was taught in the past totally. I still use some of the methodologies. I teach phonic sounds if learners are stuck

with the pronunciation of the words and I give them questions to answer from the text which they have read. I do a lot of comprehension in what ever they read. They read aloud in groups in order to help those who are struggling to read. They also read in pairs and individually.

Interviewer: Question 8 (c): Are those the only strategies/methods you use to teach reading in your class?

Abby: The other thing which helps me a lot is that everyday we have a reading exercise for 20 minutes before any lesson starts. It is the policy of the school to see to it that learners have to read even few sentences or a short paragraph and after that they have to explain what they read, just to see if they really understood what they were reading. This exercise has become a culture in my class and I really want to help those who cannot read.

Interviewer: Question 9: How were you trained to teach reading in Grade 4?

Abby: The way I was trained to teach reading is through the Molteno Project workshop for Grade 1 in 2000, if I can remember correctly. But I was not trained on how to teach reading specifically in Grade 4. Sometimes I always go and observe how other teachers are teaching reading in their classes. I think Advisory teachers should train us how to teach a reading lesson. In my class I teach the way I want as long as children can read, it is fine with me.

Interviewer: Question 10: What is your understanding on the concept teaching reading?

Abby: Reading is understanding what you are reading. For example in my class, I give my learners to read five sentences from the reader and explain to me what they have read. I give them twenty minutes reading exercise, after that I ask them what they have read. This exercise helps me to help those who cannot read.

Interviewer: Question 11: What problems do you encounter when teaching reading?

Abby: The problems I encounter when teaching reading are with those learners who are struggling to read because of not being prepared in their mother tongue in order to build on their second language. It takes time for those learners to read fluently. I have a problem really in enabling them to read as my school is an Afrikaans medium school attended by different ethnic groups.

Interviewer: Question 11 (a): What do you do to help them?

Abby: What I do is, I put them with those who can read in groups in order to help them. You know that learners learn better from their friends. Sometimes I ask them to come back in the afternoon, so that I can teach and help them to read. As I have the reading corner in the class, I call them in a group and I choose simple text for them to read. This helps them although sometimes it takes time but they are really trying.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your time.

Abby: Thank you.

CASSY (MADALA PRIMARY SCHOOL)

Interviewer: Question 1: How long have you been teaching in Grade 4?

Cassy: I have been teaching for 22 years and I have been teaching in Grade 4 for 8 years now.

Interviewer: Question 2: What kind of teacher training did you do?

Cassy: I did the Primary Teachers certificate (ECP), Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD in service) specializing in Lower Primary and I graduated in 2002 from Windhoek College of Education.

Interviewer: Question 2 (a): Apart from your qualifications are you married?

Cassy: Oh, yes I am married with children.

Interviewer: Question 3: What grades do you teach and how many learners do you have in your class?

Cassy: I am teaching Grade 4 and I have 42 learners in my class.

Interviewer: Question 3 (a): What language do you teach reading in?

Cassy: I teach in both Otjiherero and English and we have another Grade 4 class offering Khoikhoigowab and English.

Interviewer: Question 3 (b): Why do you teach in both languages?

Cassy: I teach in both languages because Grade 4 is class teaching and I am the only teacher teaching in this class. The other reason is that Otjiherero is taught as a subject in Grade 4 and English is a medium of instruction.

Interviewer: Question 3 (c): Which language are you comfortable with in teaching reading?

Cassy: I am more comfortable with my own language Otjiherero.

Interviewer: Question 3 (d): May I know why?

Cassy: Otjiherero is my own language. I can speak, read and write in my language more fluently. Ammmn although I am Otjiherero speaking, I can teach Afrikaans because I am used to speaking the language before and after independence than English. English is a foreign language and sometimes it is difficult to pronounce some of the words in English. The other issue is that learners are used to mother tongue from home and from Grades 1-3. This automatic switch to English in Grade 4 is a problem.

Interviewer: Question 4: Do you have a school library or a reading corner in your class?

Cassy: Yes, we have a mini-school library, but it is very small and there are few books in it. Most of the books are old and we have few reading story books in our library.

Interviewer: Question 4 (a): Are Grade 4s allowed to borrow books from the library to go and read at home?

Cassy: No, they are not allowed to take books from the library to read at home. Sometimes they can borrow books from the library but they cannot go with the books at home, instead I keep them in a cupboard.

Interviewer: Question 4 (b): Why are they not allowed borrowing books from the library?

Cassy: Because they may lose the books and since the library does not have enough books they cannot be allowed. The other thing is that, since they have no Basic Information Science (BIS) as a subject on the timetable, there are not allowed to take books. You know, at the beginning of the year parents were told to buy story books for their children and only a few managed. The other parents do not have money.

Interviewer: Question 4 (c): What happened to BIS?

Cassy: It is now integrated into languages according to the new revised curriculum for lower primary.

Interviewer: Question 4 (d): Let me go back to the question, do you have a reading corner in your class?

Cassy: Yes! I have a small reading corner. I have few magazines, extracts from newspapers and a reader. I don't have enough books in my reading corner.

Interviewer: Question 5: How were you taught how to read when you were a child?

Cassy: When I was a child I was taught to sound words for example tja tje tji tjo tju in Otjiherero, this helped me to read earlier. In the past we memorized those sounds and we knew them by heart. Learners should first read in their mother tongue in order to build on the second language. When I was in Grade 4, I was able to read and write a letter in Otjiherero. I answered comprehension questions from the reading passage because I understood what I was reading quite well. It was even easier to remember words in mother tongue than in a second language.

Interviewer: Question 5 (a): Is memorization the best way to teach reading?

Cassy: Yea, but sometimes it is bad because you will not know the meaning of the words. But with the sounds of mba, mbe, mbi, mbo, mbu, it is good because you know which word starts with which sound.

Interviewer: Question 5 (b): Is there a difference between the way you were taught in the past and now?

Cassy: Yes, in the past we memorized but we knew how to read and write. But now most of the learners do not know how to read. In grade 1 already I knew how to write a letter in my mother tongue already.

Interviewer: Question 5 (c): Are you happy the way you were taught in the past in Grade 4?

Cassy: Very much, after independence we adopted learner centered education, which makes learners active and teachers' passive, but learners are struggling to read. In the past untrained teachers, who only did the talking, taught me and I just listened, but yet I could read. We repeated and memorized rhymes and poems in mother tongue and Afrikaans without understanding, but I still emphasize I could read. This learner-centered education is giving much freedom to learners and that is why they do not concentrate. In my case I am still struggling with it. I put learners in groups to help each other when reading, but it takes time. When are they going to finish the stories in their reader if they read in groups? Overcrowdedness in our classes also makes it difficult to give individual attention to those learners who are struggling to read. It is even worse as learners will be just opening their mouth without reading and following in their reader. Ammn, you know those days in the apartheid era, schools were mostly up to Standard 6 and many teachers were not qualified at all. I am also one of the Standard 6 teachers, except that I have upgraded myself and the important thing I can say is that I can read.

Interviewer: Question 6: Where you having enough story-books to read both at home and at school to enable you to know how to read?

Cassy: I did not have books to read at home and my parents could not afford to buy books for me to read. I just used the reader from the school, but despite of not having books at home I am proud to say, I can read.

Interviewer: Question 7: What strategies/methods did your teachers use in Grade 4 to teach you how to read?

Cassy: My teacher used a variety of strategies. She used flash cards and we were made to recognize words either by sounding or reading from memory. I remember very

well that I sounded words in my own mother tongue and formulated sentences out of the words. I had to know the sounds and word lists which were given by the teacher.

Interviewer: Question 7 (a): Which other strategies/methods did your teacher use in teaching you how to read?

Cassy: The most common strategy I can remember even in Grade 4 was drilling. We drilled vowels in Otjiherero with different consonants and formulated words and sentences out of the words. My teacher also used spelling and dictation. She dictated comprehension questions from our reader and we answered in our exercise books. Sometimes these questions went up to twenty marks and the rule was to get half of the questions right. It forced me to read the story over and over again in order to prepare for the dictation. I think there is no best method for teaching reading; even the teachers in the past used the combined method they thought enabled the learners to read.

Interviewer: Question 8: How according to your own experiences should reading be taught?

Cassy: First of all sound the word and then explain the word to learners to get the meaning. And then divide the word into syllables, sound it again and again.

Interviewer: Question 8 (a): Are you doing this in your class?

Cassy: Yeah

Interviewer: Question 8 (b): How do you teach reading in your own class?

Cassy: First of all I do the phonic sounds based on the story they are reading. I choose the words with similar sounds and drill them with the learners. And then if they are difficult words from the story, I write them on the flash cards and learners are requested to read and pronounce the words correctly. After that they will try to put the words into sentences.

Interviewer: Question 8 (c): Is that the only strategy you use to teach reading in your class?

Cassy: Yeah, just sounding the words is very important and learners can know how to read. Although, sometimes I always use group, individual and pair to read. After that they all read together.

Interviewer: Question 9: How were you trained to teach reading in Grade 4?

Cassy: If my memory serves me well, I cannot remember being trained how to teach reading in Grade 4 not at all. What I can remember is only during the workshop of Grades 3 and 4 when teachers were trained on the new revised curriculum. A facilitator demonstrated a reading lesson to us.

Interviewer: Question 10: What is your understanding on the concept teaching reading?

Cassy: You know, for me reading is just reading whether with understanding or not. If learners can open their mouth and read word by word, and words are coming out of their mouths then they are reading. You know, the new policy says learners should know how to read. I can read other languages though I cannot understand what I read, to me that is reading.

Interviewer: Question 11: What problems do you encounter when teaching reading?

Cassy: Lack of reading books and I cannot make copies for them because there are many learners in my class.

Interviewer: Question 11 (a): What do you do to help them?

Cassy: I help them read and I write words on the chalkboard for them to go and read at home.

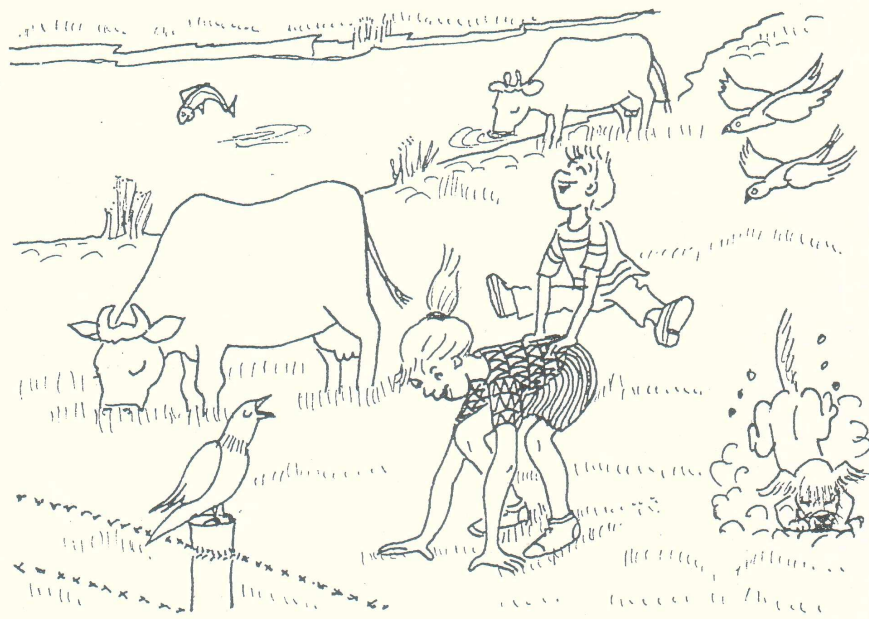
Interviewer: Thank you very much for your time

Cassy: You are welcome!

10 Doing words Verbs

What are they doing?

Look at the drawing below. Each person and animal is doing something. Can you describe what each one is doing? Write the words in the space below.



Read a story

1. Read this story about the boy and girl in the picture on page 2.

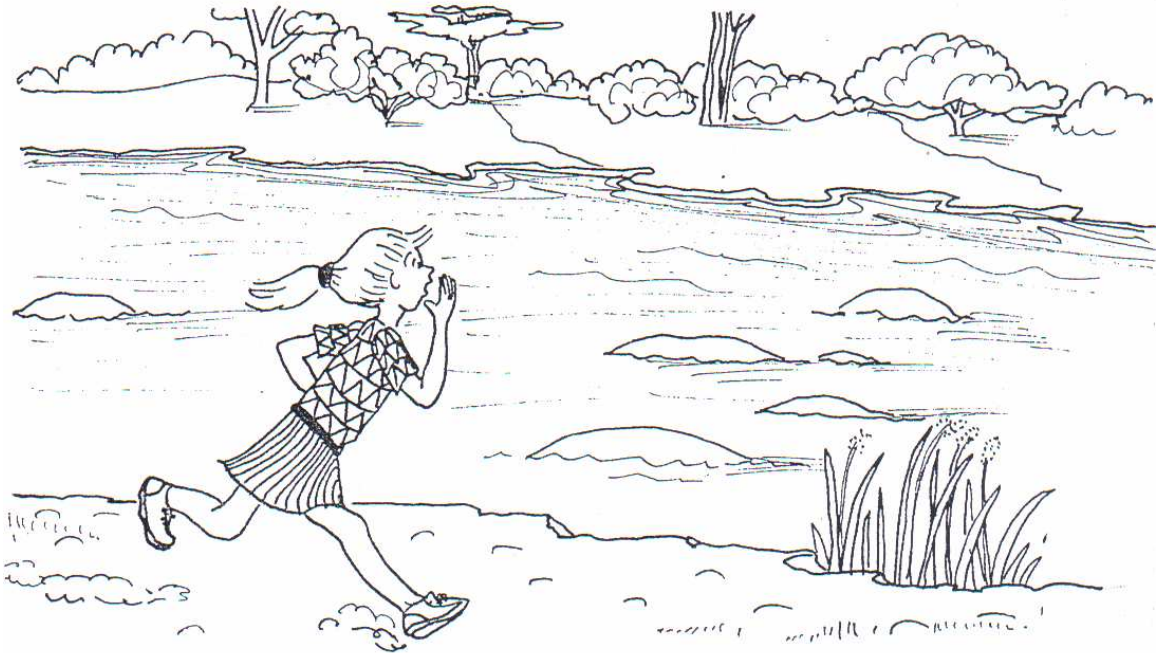
Serena lived with her family on a hillside near a river. During the week, her parents went to work in the town nearby. Serena walked to school on the other side of the hill with her friends. In the morning, her grandmother looked after her younger brother, Peter. In the afternoon, after doing her homework, Serena looked after him. They walked in the veld, they painted pictures, they sang songs, and they played all sorts of games.

One winter afternoon Serena came home later than usual. The sun was low in the sky and big grey clouds were blowing over the hill. Serena's grandmother came hurrying towards her.

'I can't find Peter,' she said. 'I've been calling and calling. I'm so worried.'

'Don't worry, Granny,' said Serena, 'I'll find him. Please tell the neighbours to come down to the river.' Serena ran down the hill. She knew that the neighbours would soon join the search for Peter. But she also knew that she was the best person to start looking. She knew where her brother liked to go.

Peter was not allowed to go to the river alone. But he liked to play in the water and to walk on the stepping stones. Serena ran along the river calling Peter's name.



2. What do you think has happened to Peter? Tell your parent or helper.

Making meaning

1. Words that describe actions, or things that people or animals do, are called verbs. Every sentence has a verb in it. Some sentences have more than one verb. Underline all the verbs you can find in the story on page 2

2. The three words below are from the story. Circle the correct meaning for each of them. You may find it helpful to look for the words again in the story.
 - neighbours
 - a. people who live near you
 - b. people who live far away
 - c. your uncle's children

 - search
 - a. look for someone or something
 - b. find someone or something
 - c. open a room

 - alone
 - a. something that you have borrowed
 - b. without any other people
 - c. with your friends

3. Why do you think Peter was not allowed to go to the river on his own? Write three sentences about how water can be dangerous.

4. Read these sentences. Write 'true' or 'false' at the end of each sentence.
 - a. Serena liked her brother. _____
 - b. Serena was cross with her grandmother. _____
 - c. Serena knew where her brother liked to go. _____
 - d. Serena could not find her brother. _____
 - e. The neighbours did not want to help. _____

Using verbs

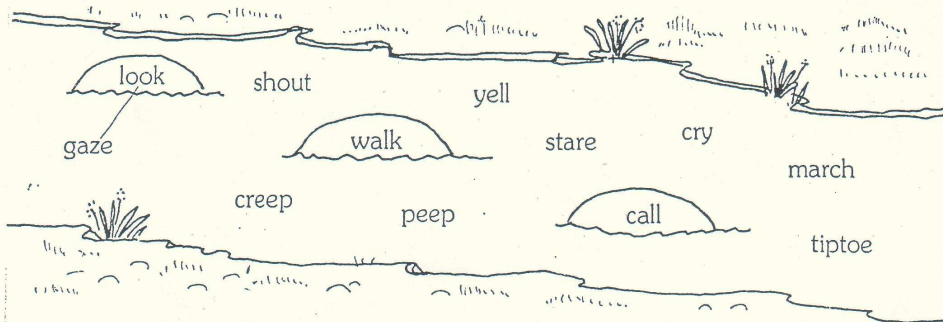
1. Read about what happens to Serena and Peter. Choose verbs from the box to finish the sentences below.

tied	ran	arrived	screamed	walked	told	found
heard	saw	touched	gave	broken	called	

Serena _____ along the river and _____ Peter's name. Then she _____ the sound of crying, and she _____ her brother sitting on a stepping stone in the middle of the river. Serena _____ on the stepping stones until she reached him. She _____ his leg. He _____ in pain. His poor little leg was _____. She _____ a stick next to the river and _____ it to his leg with her belt. She _____ him her jersey and _____ him stories. When the neighbours _____ with a stretcher they said to her: 'You were very brave.'



2. Different words can have the same meaning. Draw lines to match the verbs floating in the river with the verbs in the stepping stones. The first one has been done for you.



WRITING PORTFOLIO

Have you ever helped a person or an animal who was in danger? Write a paragraph (10 sentences)

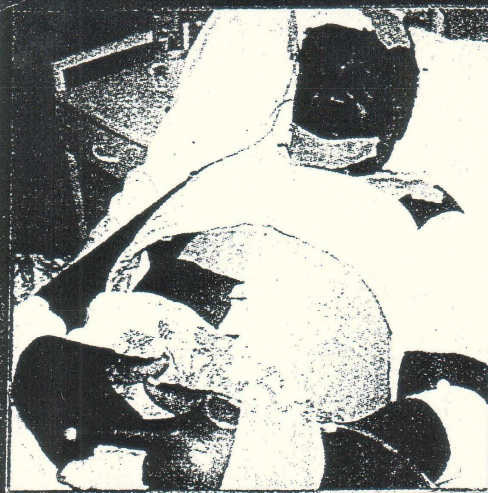


Photo: Oswald Shivute

ALL FOR N\$100? ... Meschtilde Martin in her hospital bed at Oshakati after her son allegedly hacked her with a panga in an argument over money.

Frenzied panga attack 'sparked by N\$100'

• OSWALD SHIVUTE at OSHAKATI

A 58-year-old woman, Meschtilde Martin, is in a serious condition in the Intensive Care Unit of the Oshakati State Hospital after her son allegedly attacked her with a panga.

Regional Police Commander Josef Anghuwo told *The Namibian* that the attack was apparently prompted by the woman's refusal to hand over N\$100 that her son had given to her for safekeeping.

The Police at Oshakati and Ondangwa are investigating the attack which took place at Ehafo village near Ondangwa on Saturday night.

Martin's 28-year-old son is alleged to have hacked his mother all over her body with the panga.

He allegedly also set two huts on fire before fleeing.

Police spokesperson Constable Christina Fonseca said yesterday that the Police were still looking for the suspect.

She said Ehafo village is surrounded by oshanas full of water and the Police vehicles that went to search for the suspect became stuck in the mud on Sunday.

"We are still looking for ways to arrest him, but it is difficult because of much water in that area," Fonseca said.

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